PENGUIN CLASSICS

PLUTARCH

THE RISE AND FALL OF ATHENS: NINE GREEK LIVES

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NINE GREEK LIVES

ADVISORY EDITOR: BETTY RADICE

Plutarch was one of the last of the classical Greek historians. He was born in about A.D. 45 at Chaeronea in Boeotia, where he later had a school, and in middle age he took up a priesthood at nearby Delphi.

When Nero visited Greece in A.D. 66, Plutarch was a student at Athens. He became a philosopher, a man capable of lecturing on and discussing many learned topics, and wrote a large number of essays and dialogues on philosophical, scientific and literary subjects (the *Moralia*). He adopted the philosophical standpoint of a Platonist, and frequently attacked both Stoics and Epicureans. he wrote his historical works somewhat late in life, and his *Parallel Lives* of eminent Greeks and Romans is probably his best-known and most influential work (their translation by North was used by Shakespeare as a source for his Roman plays).

Plutarch travelled in Egypt and also went to Rome, where he had many distinguished friends. The Emperor Hadrian honoured him with a government appointment in Greece, yet he always remained strongly attached to his native Chaeronea. His death probably occurred some years after A D 120.

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THE RISE AND FALL OF ATHENS

NINE GREEK LIVES BY PLUTARCH

THESEUS
SOLON
THEMISTOCLES
ARISTIDES
CIMON
PERICLES
NICIAS
ALCIBIADES
LYSANDER

TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
IAN SCOTT-KILVERT

PENGUIN BOOKS

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INTRODUCTION

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SIR THOMAS NORTH entitled his great translation of Plutarch *The Lives of The Noble Grecians and Romans. Noble* was his own importation, but it was a peculiarly well-chosen epithet, for it serves to emphasize the qualities which distinguish Plutarch from the Greek historians of the golden age. It reminds us of the distance which separates him from his subjects and of the heroic aura which had grown up around them in the meanwhile. Plutarch is, as it were, a backward-looking writer standing on the last range which divided the pagan civilization from the Christian. He lacks the startlingly original and impersonal quality of Periclean literature, just as that literature lacks his intimacy on the one hand and the breadth of his tolerance and philanthropy on the other. He was no Thucydides, applying a ruthlessly objective analysis to uncover the historical process. He was a lover of tradition, and his prime object was at once to cherish and understand the greatness of the past and to re-assert it as a living ideal.

Plutarch's life-time of some seventy-five years stretches from the middle forties A.D. to the beginning of Hadrian's reign. It is the period at which the blend of Greek and Roman culture reached its highest point of development; almost all the major writers had done their work and Plutarch's writings are in many ways a summing up of that culture. He came of an ancient Theban family and he never strayed for long from his home-town of Chaeronea, a small city lying in the midst of the great Boeotian plain which the Greeks called 'the dancing-floor of Ares' and which had witnessed the decisive battles of Haliartus, Leuctra, Chaeronea itself, and many more. Not that his own outlook was provincial in any narrowing sense. He studied philosophy in Athens as a young man, travelled in Greece and Egypt, earned a high reputation both as a scholar and a diplomat in Rome, making many influential friends in the process, and may even have been granted honorary consular rank.

Plutarch himself assiduously practised the ideal of the city-state, that the educated man should play his part in public life; and he held a succession of magistracies at Chaeronea and a priesthood at Delphi,

In any political sense, of course, Greece had lost the last vestiges of her independence at the sack of Corinth two centuries before. Meanwhile not only had her population shrunk, but the riches and other material rewards of Italy and Asia had attracted many of her ablest soldiers, administrators, and scholars to emigrate, so that in his own time, according to Plutarch's estimate, Greece could scarcely have put three thousand armed men into the field. In the directly practical sphere no Greek could do anything to alter these realities, and yet it was no mere antiquarian sentiment which influenced Plutarch to keep his Hellenism as intact as possible rather than embark, say, on the career of an imperial civil servant. For the governing class of his day Roman and Greek education had become inseparably intermingled, and in the Roman Empire, which was now beginning to enjoy the benefits of stable government and yet possessed neither a moral nor an intellectual centre, a teacher of Plutarch's stature could still hope to benefit his fellow-men by inspiration and example.

The form of Plutarch's writings suggests that his gifts were for the essay rather than the full-length history. Apart from the biographies his other major work, the *Moralia*, is a collection of comparatively short treatises and dialogues which cover an immense range of subjects, literary, ethical, political, and scientific. There is a distinct correspondence between the two, the *Moralia* celebrating the thought of the past as the *Lives* celebrate its action, and each throws a great deal of light on the other. Plutarch never attempted any single work on a large scale and his themes are not developed organically, but rather as a series of factual statements followed by comments. Both in the *Moralia* and the *Lives* his main object is didactic. When he turned to history, he set out not only to convince the Greeks that the annals of Rome deserved their attention, but also to remind the Romans that Greece had possessed soldiers and statesmen who could challenge comparison with their own. He wrote only of men of action and he explains at the beginning of the *Life of Pericles* why he chose these rather than artists or philosophers. It was perhaps because of his firm belief that the two races should draw mutual profit from their traditions that he named the series *Parallel Lives* and grouped his Greeks and Romans in pairs. He liked to regard Greek and Roman history as complementary in a sense, and this arrangement of his material allowed him to sum up his heroes' moral qualities and measure their achievements in the formal essay of comparison with which he concludes most of the pairs of *Lives*. But these resemblances were often more coincidental than real, and Plutarch does not in fact pursue them very far; indeed he could not have done so without seriously distorting his material.

The order of composition of the *Lives* is still much disputed, but

there are signs that they were written in four distinct groups. One series contained the lives of Sertorius and Eumenes, Cimon and Lucullus, Lysander and Sulla, Demosthenes and Cicero, Agis and Cleomenes and Tiberius and Caius Gracchus, Pelopidas and Marcellus, Phocion and Cato the Younger, and Aristides and Cato the Elder. This series Plutarch undertook, he tells us, at the request of his friends, and it may also have included the lost Epaminondas, Plutarch's favourite hero, paired here with Scipio Africanus. A second group was composed for his own satisfaction, and it consists of great men chosen as object-lessons in a particular virtue: Pericles and Fabius Maximus, Nicias and Crassus, Dion and Brutus, Timoleon and Aemilius Paulus, Philopoemen and Titus Flaminius, Themistocles and Camillus, Alexander and Julius Caesar, Agis and Pompey, Pyrrhus and Marius and Solon and Publicola. A third group was chosen to comprise those whose career may serve as a warning. It contains Demetrius and Mark Antony and Alcibiades and Coriolanus, and here, paradoxically, Plutarch achieved from the literary point of view three of his most brilliant portraits. Lastly he turned to the semi-mythical and wrote of the founding fathers and legislators of Greece and Rome, Theseus and Romulus, and Lycurgus and Numa.

The present selection has been drawn up on the same principle as Mr Rex Warner's volume of Roman *Lives*.[1] Instead of reproducing Plutarch's arrangement of Greeks and Romans in pairs, I have grouped nine of the *Lives* in chronological order so as to trace one of the crucial periods of Greek history, in this case the story of Athens from the legendary times of Theseus down to the end of the Peloponnesian War. To read the *Lives* in sequence has the advantage, among others, of bringing to the fore Plutarch's gifts as a social historian. His delight in anecdote and personal idiosyncrasy, his sympathy for the common man, and his readiness to introduce minor characters as foils to his heroes, create as it were a brilliant human tapestry before which the great events of the Persian Wars and the age of Pericles are unfolded.

By Plutarch's time a conventional form of biography already existed. It began with an account of the subject's birth, family, and education, went on to delineate his character and recount the most important and typical events of his career, and concluded with an account of his posterity and influence. Plutarch followed this organization of his material fairly closely, but he employed it with far greater skill and variety than his predecessors. He freed his *Lives* from the rhetorical and argumentative nature of Greek biography and from the ponderous eulogy of the Roman *laudatio*; above all he impressed on them the charm of his personality and the depth of his insight into

1. *Fall of the Roman Republic*, Penguin Books, 1958.

human nature. He was a conscientious collector of material and he draws, especially in the Greek *Lives*, upon a very wide range of authorities, although these are of distinctly unequal value, for he was better at amassing evidence than at sifting it. But the task as he saw it, working over material which was already familiar in outline to his readers, was not so much to evaluate facts as to create an inspiring portrait. And so, like a portrait-painter, we find him choosing a characteristic yet possibly idealized pose for his subjects. He is a great master of the *ben trovato*, and his comment on the story of Solon and Croesus explains the procedure which he follows again and again:

> When a story is so celebrated and is vouched for by so many authorities and, more important still, when it is so much in keeping with Solon's character and bears the stamp of his wisdom and greatness of mind, I cannot agree that it should be rejected because of the so-called rules of chronology . . .

The conclusion of the *Life of Themistocles* is another case in point. Seldom does Plutarch lay on the colours to such effect and seldom with less historical support. He feels that the hero's stature demands an elaborate account of his reception by the king of Persia; and finally in describing his suicide by poison so as to avoid tarnishing the glory of his past triumphs, he deliberately rejects Thucydides' version to the effect that Themistocles died a natural death. On the other hand, but for Plutarch we should know almost nothing of the character of Cimon, who, judged by results alone, must be ranked among the greatest of all Athenian soldiers and statesmen.

The story of Athens over this period is a blend of glory and tragedy that needs no introduction, and the career of Theseus, the young giant-killer who fails to mature after he has reached the heights of power, provides a curtain-raiser which is only too prophetic of what was to follow. Plutarch passes judgement on these events, and the consequent collapse of Greek liberties, in a memorable passage from his *Life of Flamininus*:

> For if we except the victory at Marathon, the sea-fight at Salamis, the battles of Plataea and Thermopylae and Cimon's exploits at Eurymedon . . . Greece fought all her battles against and to enslave herself. She erected all her trophies to her own shame and misery and was brought to ruin and desolation almost wholly by the guilt and ambition of her great men.

Still, it is not the cycle of history which really engages Plutarch's attention, and his habit of seeing all events in personal terms is at once his weakness and his strength. His purpose is to bring out the moral pattern in a hero's career, the movement from virtue to vice (Theseus) or the contrary (Cimon), for he believed that a man cannot stand still in virtue and that if he does not advance he will be driven back. He

brought to history a Platonist's conviction that knowledge is virtue and that cause and effect are really only operative in the sphere of Ideas: hence he tends to describe his statesmen's policies simply in terms of their personalities and to judge public conduct by the ethical standards of private life. He forgets that a statesman is far more often faced with a conflict of opposing interests than with a straight choice between right and wrong, and he seems to regard the past as a completely separate world, rather than as a continuum, which merges imperceptibly into present and future.

On the other hand it is just this boundless interest in the individual character which has given the *Lives* their enduring popularity from age to age. Plutarch has an unerring sense of the drama of men in great situations. His eye ranges over a wider field of human action than any of the classical historians. He surveys men's conduct in war, in council, in love, in the use of money – always a vital test in Greek eyes of a man's capacities – in religion, in the family, and he judges as a man of wide tolerance and ripe experience. Believing implicitly in the stature of his heroes, he has a genius for making greatness stand out in small actions. We think of Alexander handing to his physician the paper denouncing him as an assassin, and in the same gesture drinking off the physic the man had prepared him, or of Aristides writing down his name to enable an illiterate fellow-Athenian to ostracize him: these and countless other scenes Plutarch has engraved on the memory of posterity for all time. It was surely this power of his to epitomize the moral grandeur of the ancient world which appealed most strongly to Shakespeare and Montaigne and inspired the gigantic outlines of such typically Renaissance heroes as Coriolanus and Mark Antony, and later prompted Mme Roland's remark that the *Lives* are the pasturage of great souls.

* * *

Plutarch is not an author whom students of Greek are encouraged to take as a model of style. He can tell a story with great effect – witness his descriptions of the battles of Salamis and Plataea, and of the building of Periclean Athens. He is at his most original, both in thought and vocabulary, when he sets out to analyse characters, motives or states of mind. But in general the structure of his sentences is too loose and unwieldy for a close rendering into English, and the translator is constantly obliged to shorten and re-shape them if the narrative is to flow with any freedom or smoothness. A new translation was certainly overdue and my main concern here has been to bring the resources of the modern idiom to express Plutarch's thought as faithfully as possible.

There is, however, a deliberate sententiousness about his choice of words which often restrains the translator from going to the extremes of informality. Where a phrase has seemed to me exactly right, I have not hesitated to borrow from Langhorne, Clough, or other translators. In conclusion I should like to express my warm thanks to Dr G. T. Griffith of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, who has provided much salutary criticism of the translation and notes and made valuable constructive suggestions.

I. S.-K.

I

THESEUS

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You know, Sosius Senecio,[1] how geographers, when they come to deal with those parts of the earth which they know nothing about, crowd them into the margins of their maps with the explanation, 'Beyond this lie sandy, waterless deserts full of wild beasts', or 'trackless swamps', or 'Scythian snows', or 'ice-locked sea'. Now that in writing my *Parallel Lives* I have reached the end of those periods in which theories can be tested by argument or where history can find a solid foundation in fact, I might very well follow their example and say of those remoter ages, 'All that lies beyond are prodigies and fables, the province of poets and romancers, where nothing is certain or credible.'

However, after I had published my account of Lycurgus the lawgiver and Numa the king, there seemed to be nothing unreasonable in going back a step further to Romulus, since my history had brought me so close to his times. Then, when I asked myself, as Aeschylus puts it:[2]

> With such a champion who will dare to engage?
> Whom shall I match against him? Who can face the challenge?

it seemed clear that I could find no more fitting counterpart for the father of glorious and unconquerable Rome than Theseus, the founder of the lovely and far-famed city of Athens. Let us hope, then, that I shall succeed in purifying fable, and make her submit to reason and take on the appearance of history. But when she obstinately defies probability and refuses to admit any element of the credible, I shall

1. One of the most influential of Plutarch's Roman friends. He was four times consul between A.D. 98 and 107, a scholar and a correspondent of Pliny. Plutarch also addresses him at the beginning of the Lives of *Demosthenes* and of *Dion*.

2. *Seven Against Thebes*, 435.

throw myself on the indulgence of my readers and of those who can listen with forbearance to the tales of antiquity.

2. It struck me, at any rate, that there were a number of resemblances which gave point to the parallel. Both men were unacknowledged children of uncertain parentage and were reputed to be of divine descent,

Both of them warriors, as the whole world knows,[1]

and both combined a keen intelligence with great physical strength. Of the two most famous cities in the world Romulus founded the one and Theseus made a capital of the other, and each of them resorted to abducting women. Both men suffered misfortune at home and incurred the just resentment of their kinsmen, and both at the end of their lives are said to have fallen out with their fellow countrymen, if we may accept those stories which seem to have been written with the least poetic exaggeration as a guide to the truth.

3. On his father's side Theseus traces his descent from Erechtheus and the earliest inhabitants of Attica, and on his mother's from Pelops. Pelops was the most powerful of the kings in the Peloponnese, not so much by virtue of his wealth as of the number of his children. He married many of his daughters to the highest in the land and established many of his sons far and wide as rulers of the Peloponnesian cities. One of these, named Pittheus, the grandfather of Theseus, founded Troezen;[2] this is, in fact, only a small city, but he himself had the reputation of being the wisest of men and the most deeply versed in the lore of his age. The essence of his wisdom and the form it took seem to have been of the same kind as made Hesiod famous, in particular for the collection of maxims contained in his *Works and Days*. One of these is attributed to Pittheus:

When you promise to pay a friend, then reward him in generous measure.[3]

or so we are told on Aristotle's authority, and Euripides, when he causes Hippolytus to be addressed as 'pupil of the holy Pittheus',[4] shows what opinion the world held of Pittheus.

1. *Iliad*, vii, 281, referring to Telamonian Ajax and Hector.
2. A small, ancient town on the shore of the Saronic Gulf opposite Athens.
3. *Works and Days*, 370.
4. *Hippolytus*, 11.

Now when Aegeus the king of Athens wished to beget children, he is said to have consulted the Pythian priestess, and to have been given that famous oracle in which she commanded him not to have intercourse with any woman until he reached Athens. However, Aegeus thought that this instruction was far from clearly expressed, and so on his way home he turned aside at Troezen and confided to Pittheus the god's actual words, which were as follows:

Loose not the jutting neck of the wineskin, great chief of the people,
Till you have come once again to the city of Athens.

Pittheus evidently grasped the meaning of the oracle and either persuaded or enticed him into sleeping with Aethra. Afterwards, when Aegeus discovered that the girl was Pittheus's daughter and suspected that she was pregnant by him, he left a sword and a pair of sandals hidden under a great rock, which contained a hollow just big enough for these objects to fit into. He took nobody but Aethra into his confidence and told her that if she bore him a son and he was able, when he reached manhood, to lift the rock and take what had been left underneath, she must then send the boy secretly to him, bringing these tokens and, so far as possible, without anybody knowing of his journey. Aegeus was mortally afraid at that time of the sons of Pallas, his brother, who were plotting against him and who despised him for his childlessness; there were no less than fifty of these brothers, all of them sons of Pallas. After this he left Aethra.

4. According to one version of the story, when Aethra gave birth to a son, he was immediately named Theseus because the tokens for identifying him had been *placed* under the stone. Others, however, say that he was only given the name later at Athens, when Aegeus *acknowledged*[1] him as his son. He was brought up by Pittheus and had a master and tutor named Connidas. Even now the Athenians still offer a sacrifice of a ram to this man on the eve of the festival of Theseus, and indeed this mark of respect is far better deserved than are the honours they pay to Silanio and Parrhasius, who were merely the authors of paintings and statues of Theseus.

5. In those days it was still the custom for youths who were on the point of coming of age to visit Delphi and make a sacrifice to the god

1. The resemblance between this word and the word 'placed', above, obvious in Greek, cannot be reproduced in English.

of some of their hair, which was then cut for the first time. Theseus arrived in Delphi for this ceremony, and there is said to be a place which to this day is named the Theseia after him. However, he cut off only the front part of his hair, just as Homer tells us the Abantes did,[1] and this kind of tonsure was called Theseis in his memory.

Now the Abantes, who were the first to cut their hair in this fashion, did not learn it from the Arabs, as some people believe, nor did they do it out of rivalry with the Mysians. The reason was that they were a warlike people who practised hand-to-hand fighting, and had become more expert than any other race at forcing their way into close combat with the enemy. Archilochus bears witness to this in the following verses:[2]

No room for the whirling sling or the stretch of the bowstring,
When fierce Ares comes striding to join in the thick of the battle
Down in the plain: 'tis the sword brings death and mourning to many,
For this is the hand-to-hand combat of which these men are the masters,
The far-famed spearmen and lords of Euboea . . .

So in order to deny their enemies a hand-hold on their hair, they cut it off. No doubt Alexander of Macedon understood this, too, when he gave orders to his generals, so we are told, to have the beards of their Macedonians shaved, because these offered the easiest hold in battle.

6. All through his childhood, then, Aethra kept Theseus's true parentage a secret, and Pittheus put about the story that the boy's father was Poseidon. The people of Troezen pay special honours to Poseidon; he is the city's patron god, they offer him the first fruits of their sacrifices and his trident is used as an emblem on their coins. However, when Theseus had grown into a youth and shown that he possessed not only physical strength, but courage and a resolute spirit, combined with good sense and intelligence, then Aethra led him to the rock, explained to him the truth about his birth and told him to take his father's tokens from underneath it and sail to Athens. Theseus put his shoulder to the rock and lifted it with ease, but he refused to make the journey by sea, even though this was the safest route and his grandfather and mother begged him to take it. At this time it was difficult to travel to Athens by land, for the road was infested by bandits and ruffians and scarcely any part of it was free from them.

1. *Iliad*, ii, 542.
2. Bergk. *Poetae Lyrici Graeci*, ii, 383.

That age, it seems, produced a race of men who, for sheer strength of arm and swiftness of foot, were indefatigable and far surpassed the human scale, but who did not apply these gifts of nature to any just or useful purpose. Instead they exulted in an overbearing insolence and took advantage of their strength to behave with savage inhumanity and to seize, outrage, and murder all who fell into their hands. Consideration for others, justice, fair dealing, or humanity they regarded as qualities which men only praised because they lacked the courage to do wrong, or were afraid of being wronged themselves: they were no concern of men who were strong enough to get their own way. Some of these creatures were destroyed by Heracles on his many travels, but there were others who cowered and shrank into hiding as he passed by, and so escaped him, or else were spared as being too abject for his notice. Later, when Heracles had the misfortune to kill Iphitus, he departed to Lydia and served for a long time as a slave in Omphale's household. During this time there was peace and security in Lydia, but all over Greece the same outrages broke out again, because there was nobody to stamp them out or curb them.

It was therefore very dangerous to travel from the Peloponnese to Athens by land, and Pittheus tried to persuade Theseus to go by sea, by describing what each of these ruffians was like and how he treated strangers. What he did not know was that the young man had long been secretly fired by the renown which Heracles had won through his courage. He admired Heracles above all other heroes, and liked nothing better than to listen to anyone who could speak of the kind of man he was, and especially to people who had been witnesses of anything he had said or done. In fact he was evidently passing through the same state of mind that Themistocles[1] experienced many generations later, when he said that he could not sleep for thinking of Miltiades' victory. So with Theseus the valour of Heracles became his dream by night and in the daytime his desire to emulate the hero seized hold of him and spurred him on to achieve such exploits himself.

7. As it happened, the two were the sons of first cousins, and so related to one another. Aethra was the daughter of Pittheus, while Heracles' mother, Alcmene, was the daughter of Lysidice, and Lysidice and Pittheus were brother and sister, their parents being Pelops

1. See *Themistocles*, Ch. 3.

and Hippodameia. So Theseus felt that it would be an intolerable humiliation if he were to run away from whatever trials of courage he might have to face, while his cousin was setting out against evil-doers everywhere and clearing them from land and sea. He would be disgracing his reputed father, Poseidon, by travelling over the sea like a fugitive, and he would be bringing his real father nothing but a pair of sandals and a sword not yet blooded as the evidence of his noble birth, instead of proving it at once by some equally noble exploit. It was in this spirit and with these thoughts in his head that he set out, resolved to do no wrong to any man, but to punish those who offered him violence.

8. So first of all in Epidauria he came upon Periphetes, who used a club as his weapon, and hence was known as the Club-bearer. Periphetes laid hands on him and tried to bar his passage, whereupon Theseus closed with him and killed him. The club took his fancy and so he made it his weapon and continued to use it just as Heracles did the lion-skin. The skin was worn to prove how gigantic a beast the hero had overcome, and Theseus in the same way carried the club, whose stroke he had been able to parry, but which in his hands was invincible.

At the Isthmus of Corinth he killed Sinis the Pine-bender by means of the very trick with which this man had murdered so many others. Theseus did this, too, without ever having learned or practised it himself, thereby proving that true valour will prevail against any amount of contrivance or practice. Now Sinis had a tall and very beautiful daughter named Perigune, who, when her father was killed, ran away and hid herself. Theseus looked for her high and low, but she had disappeared into a place which was overgrown with shrubs and rushes and wild asparagus; the girl in her childish innocence was imploring the plants to hide her, and promising that if they saved her, she would never trample them down or burn them. When Theseus called to her and gave her his word that he would do her no harm but treat her honourably, she came out. Theseus took her to his bed and she bore him a son, Melanippus, and afterwards became the wife of Deioneus the son of Eurytus the Oechalian, to whom Theseus gave her in marriage. Melanippus, in turn, became the father of Ioxus, who took part with Ornytus in leading a colony into Caria, and on this account the descendants of Ioxus, both men and women, have

made it an ancestral custom not to burn the asparagus thorn or the rush, but to revere and honour them.

9. The wild sow of Crommyon, which went by the name of Phaea, was no ordinary beast, but a ferocious creature and very hard to overcome. Theseus went out of his way to find and kill this animal, because he did not want to give the impression that he performed his exploits only when they were forced upon him. He also considered that in his dealings with human beings a brave man ought to fight the wicked only in self-defence, but that against the nobler beasts he should take the initiative and risk his life. Another account, however, has it that Phaea was a robber, a murderous and depraved woman, who lived in Crommyon and was nicknamed The Sow because of her life and habits, and whom Theseus afterwards killed.

10. He went on to kill Sciron on the borders of Megara by flinging him down the cliffs. According to the usual account, Sciron was a robber who preyed on passing travellers, but there is another story that he used to take the insolent liberty of stretching out his feet and ordering travellers to wash them, and as they were in the act of doing so, he would lash out and topple them into the sea. On the other hand Megarian writers challenge this version and, as Simonides expresses it, wage a campaign against antiquity. They say that Sciron was by no means a man of violence or a robber, but that on the contrary he put down robbery, and was not only related to good and just men but actively befriended them. They remind us that Aeacus is generally considered to have been the most upright of all Greeks, while Cychreus of Salamis is paid divine honours at Athens, and everyone knows of the virtues of Peleus and Telamon. Now Sciron was a son-in-law of Cychreus, father-in-law of Aeacus and grandfather of Peleus and Telamon, whose mother was Endeis, Sciron's daughter by Chariclo. They argue, then, that it is most unlikely that these paragons of men would have entered into a family alliance with an out-and-out villain and exchanged the most important and dearest of pledges with him. Their version is that this episode did not take place at all when Theseus first travelled to Athens, but that later he outwitted Diocles, the ruler of Eleusis, and captured the town from the Megarians and it was there that he killed Sciron. These events are beset with contradictions of this kind.

11. At Eleusis, too, he overcame Cercyon the Arcadian at wrestling and killed him. From there, continuing his journey a little further to Erineüs, he killed Damastes, known as Procrustes, by forcing him to make his body fit his own bed, just as Procrustes had done to strangers. In doing this he was following Heracles' example, for that hero always paid back those who offered him violence with the very same treatment that they had intended for him. In this way Heracles sacrificed Busiris, despatched Antaeus at wrestling and Cycnus in single combat, and killed Termerus by smashing his skull to pieces. It is from the last-named, so we are told, that the phrase 'a Termerian mischief' originates, for it appears that Termerus was in the habit of killing everyone who met him by dashing his head against theirs. So Theseus went on his way, punishing the wicked and meting out to them the same violence that they had inflicted on others, so that they were forced to submit to a justice that was modelled on their own injustice.

12. As he pursued his journey and came to the river Cephissus, the men of the race of the Phytalidae were the first to meet and welcome him. He asked to be purified of the guilt of bloodshed, and when they had granted his wish with the usual ceremonies and offered a propitiatory sacrifice, they feasted him in their houses. This was the first act of kindness that had been done him on his journey.

It is said to have been on the eighth day of the month Cronius, now called Hecatombeion, that he reached Athens. There he found the city plunged into disorder and strife, and the affairs of Aegeus and his household in great distress. He had living with him Medea, who had been banished from Corinth and had promised to cure him of his childlessness by means of her spells. She was the first to discover who Theseus was, and since Aegeus did not know this and was now far advanced in years and full of fears because of the disturbed state of the city, she persuaded him to entertain Theseus as a foreign guest and kill him off with poison. When Theseus came to the banquet, he thought it best not to declare beforehand who he was: but in order to give his father a clue towards recognizing him, as soon as the meat was served, he drew his sword as if he were about to carve with it, and took care to attract his father's attention. Aegeus at once recognized the token, dashed down the cup of poison, and when he had tested his son, embraced him with delight; then he formally acknowledged Theseus before an assembly of the Athenians, who welcomed him gladly for

his noble qualities. It is said that, as the cup fell, the poison was spilled at the spot which is now the temple of Delphinian Apollo, for that was where Aegeus's house stood, and the statue of Hermes to the east of the sanctuary is known as the Hermes at Aegeus's gate.

13. Before Theseus appeared on the scene, the sons of Pallas had hoped to rule the kingdom after Aegeus, if he died childless, and they were enraged when Theseus was declared the successor. It was bad enough that Aegeus should wear the crown, since he was only an adopted son of Pandion and had no ties of blood with the house of Erechtheus, but that Theseus, a mere immigrant and a foreigner, should become the prospective king was altogether too much, and so they went to war. They divided their forces into two, one of which, led by Pallas, marched openly against the city from Sphettus, while the other hid itself at Gargettus and lay there in ambush, so as to attack the enemy from both sides. However, there was a herald with them named Leos, belonging to the deme of Hagnus, who betrayed to Theseus the plans of the Pallantidae. Theseus made a surprise attack upon the party that was lying in ambush and wiped it out, and when the other force under Pallas heard the news, they scattered. This is the reason, so they say, why the people of the deme of Pallene never intermarry with those of Hagnus, and why even the heralds there are not allowed to begin their proclamations with the customary phrase, 'Hear, ye people!': they detest the very word *leos*, because of the treachery of this man.

14. Theseus, who was eager for action, and anxious at the same time to win the people's favour, now set out against the bull of Marathon, which had been plaguing the inhabitants of the part of Attica known as the Tetrapolis. He mastered it and then drove it alive through the city for all to see, before sacrificing it to Apollo of the Dolphins. The story of Hecale, too, who is said to have welcomed and entertained Theseus on this expedition, seems to have some truth in it. The people of the demes in that neighbourhood were in the habit of meeting to perform the Hecalesian rites in honour of Zeus Hecalus, and they also paid honours to Hecale, whom they called by the diminutive name of Hecaline. This was because when she entertained Theseus, she caressed him as elderly people do children and called him affectionately by diminutive names in the same way, even though he was quite a young man. She made a vow, as the hero was setting out for his

struggle with the bull, that she would sacrifice to Zeus if he came back safely, but she died before he did so; hence these honours were paid to her at Theseus's command as a reward for her hospitality. This is the story which Philochorus has recorded.

15. Soon after this the collectors arrived from Crete for the third time to take away the customary tribute. Most writers agree that the payment of this tribute originated from the occasion when Androgeus was supposed to have been treacherously murdered in Attic territory. Because of this, not only did Minos carry on a war of devastation against the Athenians, but they were also visited with divine vengeance; the land would not bear fruit, there was a great plague and all the rivers dried up. Apollo then declared to them that if they placated Minos and became reconciled with him, the wrath of heaven would cease and they would be delivered from their sufferings. Thereupon they sent heralds and appealed to Minos and entered into an agreement to send him a tribute every nine years, consisting of seven young men and seven girls. According to the most dramatic version of the story, when these young men and women reached Crete, they were thrown into the Labyrinth and there killed by the Minotaur, or else wandered about and finally perished because they could find no way out; while the Minotaur itself, as Euripides tells us, was

> A mingled form, where two strange shapes combined
> And different natures, man and bull, were joined.

16. However, according to Philochorus, the Cretans deny this and declare that the Labyrinth was indeed a dungeon, but had nothing wrong with it except that the prisoners could not escape. Minos, they explain, founded funeral games in memory of Androgeus, and the prizes he gave to the victors consisted of these young Athenians, who in the meanwhile were imprisoned in the Labyrinth. The victor in the first games to be held, they say, was the man who at that time possessed the greatest power under Minos, namely Taurus, his general, and he was anything but reasonable or gentle in his disposition and treated the young Athenians harshly and cruelly. Aristotle himself in his treatise *On the Constitution of Bottiaea* evidently does not believe that these young people were put to death by Minos, but that they lived on into old age as slaves in Crete. He says, too, that the Cretans at one time, in fulfilment of an ancient vow, sent some of their first-

born as an offering to Delphi, and that among the victims to go were some descendants of these Athenian slaves. When they found that they could not support themselves in Delphi, they first crossed to Italy and settled near Iapygia, and from there travelled to Thrace and were called Bottiaeans. This, he tells us, is the reason why the girls of Bottiaea, when they perform a certain sacrifice, accompany it with a hymn beginning 'To Athens let us go!'

This suggests how dangerous it is to incur the hatred of a city which is the mistress of eloquence and poetry, for Minos has constantly been reviled and attacked on the Attic stage, and it has not done him much good to be styled 'most royal' by Hesiod or 'Zeus's confidant' by Homer. In the event the tragic poets have had their way and have showered abuse on him from platform and stage and depicted him as a man of cruelty and violence. And yet we are also told that Minos was a king and a law-giver, and that Rhadamanthus was a judge under him and a guardian of the principles of justice which Minos had laid down.

17. So when the time came for the payment of the third tribute, and those fathers, whose sons were not yet married, were obliged to present them so that the victims could be drawn by lot, the cry went up once more against Aegeus. The unhappy people complained that the king, who was the cause of all their troubles, was the only man to be exempted from the penalty; he was content to see them robbed of their lawful children and left destitute, while he made over his kingdom to a bastard son of his own, who was not even an Athenian. Theseus was deeply troubled by this; he thought it only right that he should share the fate of his fellow citizens and not stand aloof from them, and so he came forward and offered to go to Crete himself, regardless of how the lot might fall. The Athenians were struck with admiration at his courage and delighted at his public spirit, and Aegeus, finding that his prayers and entreaties could do nothing to change his son's mind or turn him from his purpose, proceeded to cast lots for the rest.

Hellanicus, however, says that the Athenians did not send out the youths and girls by casting lots, but that Minos himself used to come and choose them, and that he now picked out Theseus first of all, in accordance with the usual conditions. These, he tells us, were that the Athenians should provide the ship and that the youths should embark and sail with him, but that none of them should carry any

warlike weapon, and finally that if the Minotaur were killed, then the penalty should lapse.

On the two earlier occasions, there had seemed to be no hope of deliverance, and so the Athenians had sent out their ship with a black sail, believing that it was carrying their youth to certain doom. But this time Theseus urged his father to take heart and boasted that he would overcome the Minotaur, and so Aegeus gave the pilot a second sail, a white one, and ordered him on the return voyage to hoist the white canvas if Theseus were safe, but otherwise to sail with the black as a sign of mourning.

According to Simonides, however, the sail that Aegeus gave the pilot was not white, but 'a scarlet sail dyed with the juicy blossom of the luxuriant holm-oak', and he intended this to be the sign of their deliverance. Again in Simonides' version the pilot was Phereclus, the son of Amarsyas, but, according to Philochorus, Theseus had Nausithoüs sent him by Scirus of Salamis as his pilot and Phaeax as his look-out. The reason for this was that the Athenians had not yet turned their attention to the sea and Scirus did him this favour, Philochorus tells us, because one of the chosen youths, Menesthes, was his daughter's son. This story is supported by the evidence of the memorial shrines for Nausithoüs and Phaeax, which Theseus had built at Phalerum, near the temple of Scirus, and it is said that the festival of the Cybernesia, or Pilot's festival, is held in their honour.

18. After the lot had been cast, Theseus took all those on whom it had fallen from the Prytaneum and went to the temple of the Dolphins, where, on their behalf, he dedicated his suppliant's symbol to Apollo: this was a bough from the sacred olive tree, wreathed with fillets of white wool. Then, when he had offered up his prayers, he went down to the sea. It was the sixth day of the month Munychion, and on this date, right up to the present, the Athenians still send their girls as suppliants to the temple of the Dolphins to propitiate Apollo. There is a story, too, that he was commanded by an oracle from the god at Delphi to make Aphrodite his guide and beg her to accompany him on his voyage, and that as he was sacrificing the customary she-goat to her on the shore, it was suddenly transformed into a male, and hence the goddess has the surname Epitragia.

19. When he arrived in Crete, as most of the historians and poets tell us, Ariadne fell in love with him; it was she who gave him the

famous thread and taught him how to find his way through the mazes of the Labyrinth, and there he killed the Minotaur and sailed away with Ariadne and the young Athenians. Pherecydes tells us that Theseus also stove in the bottoms of the Cretan ships and thus prevented them from pursuing him. And Demon adds that Minos's general Taurus was killed in a naval battle in the harbour as Theseus was sailing away. However, in Philochorus's version, Minos was holding the funeral games and Taurus was expected once again to beat all his rivals, but this success was far from being popular. Taurus's disposition had made his authority hated and there was a scandalous rumour that he was too intimate with Pasiphae, the queen. So when Theseus asked leave to challenge him, Minos granted his request. As it was the custom in Crete for women as well as men to watch the games, Ariadne was present and was not only captivated by Theseus's appearance, but filled with admiration at his strength as he overcame all his opponents. Minos, also, was especially pleased because he had defeated Taurus at wrestling and humiliated him, and so he restored the Athenian youths to Theseus and released Athens from the tribute.

Cleidemus, on the other hand, gives an unfamiliar and more ambitious account of these events, which begins a long way back. There was, he says, a decree in force throughout Greece that no trireme should sail from any port carrying a crew of more than five men. The only exception was made for Jason, the commander of the *Argo*, who sailed the seas clearing them of pirates. But when Daedalus escaped from Crete in a merchant ship and made for Athens, Minos, in defiance of the decree, set off in pursuit with his warships and was driven off his course by a storm to Sicily, where he lost his life. His son, Deucalion, who was by no means averse to a war with the Athenians, sent them a message demanding the surrender of Daedalus and threatening, if they refused, to put to death the young Athenians whom Minos had taken as hostages. Theseus replied in mild terms, but declined to give up Daedalus, who was his own cousin and blood-relation, his mother being Merope, the daughter of Erechtheus. In the meantime Theseus set himself to build a fleet, part of it in Attica at the deme of Thymoetadae, far away from any public high road, and part of it under the direction of Pittheus at Troezen, as he wanted to keep his plans secret.

When the ships were ready he set out, taking Daedalus and a

number of Cretan exiles as his guides. The Cretans had no warning of his movements and supposed that the oncoming fleet was friendly, so that Theseus was able to seize the harbour, disembark his men, and reach Cnossos before his arrival was discovered. There he fought a battle at the gates of the Labyrinth and killed Deucalion and his bodyguard. As Ariadne now succeeded to the throne, he made a truce with her, recovered the young Athenians, and concluded a pact of friendship between the Athenians and the Cretans, who swore that they would never in future begin a war with Athens.

20. There are many different accounts of these events, and of the story of Ariadne, none of which agree in their details. According to some versions she hanged herself when Theseus deserted her, while others tell us that she was taken to Naxos by sailors, that she lived there with Oenarus, the priest of Dionysus, and that Theseus had abandoned her because he was in love with another woman,

> A passionate love for Aigle burned in his breast,
> Panopeus's daughter.

Hereas of Megara remarks that this line was removed from Hesiod's poems by Pisistratus, who also inserted into Homer's description of the underworld the verse

> Theseus and Pirithous, illustrious children of the gods[1]

simply to please the Athenians. There are others who say that Ariadne actually bore two sons to Theseus, Oenopion and Staphylus, and among these writers is Ion of Chios, who refers to his native city

> which long ago
> Oenopion, the son of Theseus, founded.

Now the more pleasing of these legends are common knowledge, one might say, but a very singular version of the story has been given us by Paeon, a native of the Cypriot town of Amathus. He says that Theseus was driven off his course by a storm to Cyprus, that Ariadne, who was pregnant and was suffering terribly from the motion of the ship, was put on shore by herself, and that Theseus, while trying to rescue the vessel, was swept out to sea again. The women of the island took care of Ariadne and tried to comfort her distress at being left alone by bringing her forged letters, supposed to have been written by

1. *Odyssey*, xi, 631.

Theseus. They nursed and tended her while she was in labour, and when she died before the child was born, they buried her. Paeon adds that Theseus returned later and was overcome with grief: he left money with the people of the island, charging them to offer sacrifices to Ariadne, and also had two statuettes set up in her honour, one of silver and one of bronze. Paeon further tells us that at the sacrifice in her memory, which is held on the second day of the month Gorpiaeus, one of the young men lies on the ground and imitates the cries and movements of a woman in labour, and also that the people of Amathus call the grove, where they show her tomb, the grove of Ariadne Aphrodite.

Some of the Naxian writers also have a version of their own, to the effect that there are really two Minoses and two Ariadnes. One of these, they say, was married to Dionysus in Naxos and bore him Staphylus and his brother, while the other at a later date was carried off by Theseus and deserted by him and came to Naxos accompanied by a nurse named Corcyne, whose tomb they point out. This Ariadne, they say, also died here, but she is honoured in quite a different way from her predecessor; the festival to commemorate the first Ariadne is celebrated with gaiety and revelling, but in the sacrifices performed for the second it is a spirit of sorrow and lamentation which prevails.

21. On his way back from Crete, Theseus touched at Delos. There, when he had sacrificed to Apollo and dedicated in his temple the statue of Aphrodite which he had received from Ariadne, he and the Athenian youths with him executed a dance, which they say is still performed by the people of Delos, and which consists of a series of serpentine figures danced in regular time and representing the winding passages of the Labyrinth. The Delians call this kind of dance the Crane, according to Dicaearchus, and Theseus danced it round the altar known as the Keraton, which is made of horns all taken from the left side of the head. They also say that Theseus founded games at Delos and that he began there the practice of giving a palm to the victors.

22. The story goes that as they approached the shore of Attica Theseus was so overcome by joy that he forgot, and so, too, did his pilot, to hoist the sail which was to signal their safe return to Aegeus and he in despair threw himself down from the cliff and was killed.

Theseus meanwhile put in to the shore and himself offered up the sacrifices he had vowed to the gods at Phalerum when he sailed away, and sent a herald to announce his homecoming. The messenger found many of the people mourning the king's death, and others who were naturally enough overjoyed and ready to welcome him and crown him with garlands for their deliverance. He accepted the garlands and wreathed them around his herald's staff, but on his return to the seashore, he found that Theseus had not yet poured his libations to the gods, and so, as he did not wish to disturb the sacrifice, he waited outside the precinct. Then after the libations had been made, he announced the news of Aegeus's death, whereupon Theseus and his companions hurried with cries and lamentations into the city. So it is, the tradition says, that to this very day at the festival of the Oschophoria the Athenians do not crown the herald himself, but his staff, and at the libations the bystanders cry out 'Eleleu! Eleleu!': the first of these is the cry of eager haste or of triumph, the second of trouble or confusion.

After the funeral of his father, Theseus paid his vows to Apollo on the seventh day of the month Panepsion, for this was the day of their safe return to the city. The custom of boiling different kinds of pulse, which is observed on that day, is said to have originated from the fact that the young men whom Theseus had rescued mixed up all that was left of their provisions, boiled these in a single pot and ate the whole lot up together. At this festival the Athenians also carry the so-called Eiresione, which is an olive-bough wreathed with wool – such as Theseus had carried as a suppliant – and laden with various offerings of first-fruits, to signify that the time of scarcity is past. As they walk along they sing,

> Eiresione brings figs for us and leaves of the finest wheat-flour,
> Brings us honey in pots, and oil to rub off from our bodies,
> And a beaker of heady wine for us all to go mellow to bed on.

Some writers claim that these ceremonies are performed in memory of the sons of Heracles, whom the Athenians received and entertained as suppliants in this way, but most report the tradition as I have done.

23. The thirty-oared galley in which Theseus sailed with the youths and returned safely was preserved by the Athenians down to the time

of Demetrius of Phalerum.[1] At intervals they removed the old timbers and replaced them with sound ones, so that the ship became a classic illustration for the philosophers of the disputed question of growth and change, some of them arguing that it remained the same, and others that it became a different vessel.

It was Theseus, too, who founded the Athenian festival of the Oschophoria, or carrying of the vine-branches. The story goes that he did not take with him all the young girls who had been chosen by lot on that occasion. Instead he picked out from among his friends two youths, who possessed plenty of nerve and spirit, but at the same time had fresh and girlish complexions. He gave them hot baths and kept them out of the sun, dressed their hair, made their skin smooth and improved their complexions with unguents, and in this way completely transformed their appearance. He also taught them how to imitate girls in their speech, their dress, and their walk, until they could pass unobserved, and he then included them among the girls destined for Crete without anybody discovering the secret. On his return, he and the young men led a procession, dressed in the same way as those who now carry the branches at the Oschophoria. They carry these in honour of Dionysus and Ariadne, because of the part which these two played in the story, or rather because Theseus and his companions returned to Athens at the time of the vintage. The women known as Deipnophoroi – supper-carriers – join in the procession and take part in the sacrifice to represent the mothers of the young men and girls who were chosen by lot, because they kept visiting their children to bring them bread and meat. At this festival, too, fables are recited, because these mothers used to tell their children stories to comfort them and keep up their spirits. These are the details, at any rate, which Demon has recorded for us. A sacred precinct was also set aside for Theseus, and he laid it down that those families which had given up their children as tribute for the Minotaur should pay for a sacrifice for himself. This sacrifice was presided over by the Phytalidae, whom Theseus rewarded in this way for their hospitality to him.[2]

24. After Aegeus's death Theseus conceived a wonderful and far-reaching plan, which was nothing less than to concentrate the inhabitants of Attica into a capital. In this way he transformed them into one

1. Regent of Athens for king Cassander of Macedon from 317 to 307 B.C.
2. See Ch. 12.

people belonging to one city, whereas until then they had lived in widely scattered communities, so that it was difficult to bring them together for the common interest, and indeed at times they had even quarrelled and fought one another. So he now travelled around Attica and strove to convince them town by town and clan by clan. The common people and the poor responded at once to his appeal, while to the more influential classes he proposed a constitution without a king: there was to be a democracy, in which he would be no more than the commander of the army and the guardian of the laws, while in other respects everyone would be on an equal footing. Some were convinced by his arguments without any difficulty, and others, because they feared his power, which was already great, and his enterprising spirit, preferred to be persuaded rather than forced into agreement. He then proceeded to abolish the town halls, council chambers, and magistracies in the various districts. To replace them he built a single town-hall and senate house for the whole community on the site of the present Acropolis, and he named the city Athens and created a Pan-Athenaic festival as a ceremony for the whole of Attica. He also founded the Metoecia, or festival of the resident aliens, on the sixteenth day of the month Hecatombaeon, and this is still celebrated. Next he laid down his own royal power, as he had undertaken to do, and set to work to draw up the constitution, invoking for this purpose the authority of the gods. He had sent to Delphi to consult the oracle about the future of the city and this was the answer he received:

Son of the royal line of Aegeus and Pittheus's daughter,
Many the cities whose bounds and destinies shall be encompassed
Within your citadel's walls, for so has my father ordained it.
Be not oppressed with fear, but be counselled by bold resolution,
The bladder shall buoyantly ride the surging waves of the ocean.

And later on, so it is said, the Sibyl prophesied to Athens in the same strain, when she cried out,

The bladder may be submerged, but shall not drown: this is appointed.

25. As he was ambitious to increase the size of the city still further, Theseus invited people from every quarter to settle there on equal terms with the Athenians. In fact, the current phrase, 'Come hither, all ye peoples!', is supposed to have originated as a proclamation, employed by Theseus, when he established a commonwealth which

embraced all sorts and conditions of men. But he did not allow his democracy to fall into the disorder and confusion which an indiscriminate influx might have produced. He was the first to divide the city into three distinct classes, consisting of noblemen, husbandmen, and artisans. To the noblemen he assigned the care of religious rites, the filling of the magistracies, the teaching and administration of the laws, and the interpretation of all sacred matters, and for the rest of the citizens he established, as it were, a balance of privilege, on the assumption that the noblemen would excel in dignity, the husbandmen in utility, and the artisans in numerical strength. Aristotle says that he was the first ruler to incline towards democracy and give up the royal power, and this judgement seems to be confirmed by Homer too, for in the Catalogue of Ships in *The Iliad* it is the Athenians alone to whom he refers as 'a sovereign people'.

Theseus also struck a coinage and stamped it with the figure of an ox: here he may either have been commemorating the bull of Marathon, or possibly Taurus, Minos's general, or else he may have wished to encourage farming among the citizens. At any rate it was from this coinage that the phrase *worth ten* or *worth a hundred oxen* originated. He brought the territory of Megara securely under Athenian control and afterwards he set up that famous pillar on the Isthmus of Corinth, and carved on it the inscription which marks the frontier between the two countries. This consisted of two trimeters, of which the one facing east bore the legend:

Here is not the Peloponnese, but Ionia,

and that facing west:

Here is the Peloponnese, not Ionia.

He also founded games here to rival those of Heracles; his ambition was that just as the Greeks at Heracles' instance celebrated the Olympian games in honour of Zeus, so through his own initiative they should celebrate the Isthmian games in honour of his reputed father, Poseidon. The games which had previously been established at the Isthmus in honour of Melicertes were held at night and were organized more in the form of a religious rite than of a spectacle or a great public gathering. Some writers, however, have made out that the Isthmian games were founded in memory of Sciron, and that Theseus wished in this way to atone for his murder because of the

kinship between them, for Sciron was a son of Canethus and Henioche, who was the daughter of Pittheus. Others say that their son was not Sciron but Sinis, and that it was in his honour that Theseus founded the games. However this may be, Theseus established the festival and made an agreement with the Corinthians that Athenians who came to visit the games should be provided with a place of honour in as large a space as could be covered by the sail of the state galley, which brought them there, when it was stretched out on the ground. This is what we are told by Hellanicus and by Andron of Halicarnassus.

26. According to Philochorus and various other writers, Theseus also sailed to the Black Sea and took part in a campaign with Heracles against the Amazons and here he was given Antiope as a prize for his valour. But most authorities, including Pherecydes, Hellanicus, and Herodorus, tell us that Theseus made an expedition of his own there after the time of Heracles and took the Amazon prisoner, and this is a more convincing story. For there is no record that any of his companions captured an Amazon, while Bion mentions that even this one was carried off by a trick. The Amazons, according to him, were by nature well disposed to men and did not try to escape from Theseus when he landed on their coast. On the contrary, they even sent him presents and he invited the bearer of these to come on board his ship; then, as soon as she did so, he put out to sea.

An author named Menecrates, who wrote a history of the Bithynian city of Nicaea, says that Theseus with Antiope aboard his ship stayed for some time in those parts, and that he happened to have serving with him on this expedition three young Athenians who were brothers, named Eunæos, Thoas, and Soloïs. Soloïs, he tells us, unknown to the others, fell in love with Antiope, and confided the secret to one of his intimate friends. This man approached Antiope on his behalf, but she firmly rejected him, although she handled the affair gently and with discretion and did not accuse him in front of Theseus. Soloïs in despair threw himself into a river and was drowned, and Theseus, when at last he heard of the young man's fate and the reason for it, was deeply distressed, and in his sorrow there came back to him the words of an oracle he had once been given at Delphi. The Pythian priestess there had charged him that when trouble came upon him and he was plunged into grief in a foreign land, he should found

a city there and leave some of his followers to govern it. So he founded a city on this spot and named it Pythopolis after the Pythian god, and the nearby river Soloïs in memory of the young man who had been drowned in it. He left Soloïs's two brothers to be the city's chief magistrates and lawgivers, together with Hermus, an Athenian nobleman. After him the people of Pythopolis call a certain place in the city the house of Hermes, mistakenly lengthening the second syllable and transferring the honour due to a hero to the god Hermes.

27. Now this expedition was the origin of the war with the Amazons, which seems to have been anything but a trivial or womanish affair; for the Amazons could never have pitched their camp inside the city walls or fought hand to hand close to what is now the Pnyx and the Museum, unless they had first overrun the surrounding country and so could safely approach the city. It is less easy to believe Hellanicus's statement that they came round by the Cimmerian Bosphorus, having crossed over on the ice, but the fact that they encamped almost in the heart of the city is confirmed both by the names of certain places there and also by the tombs of those who fell in battle.

Both sides held aloof for a long time and hesitated to begin the fighting, but at last Theseus, after sacrificing to Fear in obedience to an oracle, attacked the women. The battle took place in the month Boedromion on the day on which the Athenians still celebrate the festival of the Boedromia. Cleidemus, who sets out to give the exact details, states that the Amazons' left wing extended to what is now called the Amazoneum, while their right rested on the Pnyx, at the point where the gilded figure of Victory now stands. He says that the Athenians engaged the left wing, attacking it from the Museum, and that the tombs of those who fell are on either side of the street leading to the gate near the shrine of the hero Chalcodon, which is now known as the Piraeic gate. On this flank, he tells us, the women routed the Athenians and forced them back as far as the shrine of the Eumenides. But on the other side, the Athenians who attacked the Amazons from the Palladium and Ardettus and the Lyceum, drove their right wing back to their camp and killed great numbers of them. Cleidemus adds that after three months a peace was arranged through Hippolyta (for it is this name, not Antiope, which he gives to the Amazon whom Theseus married).

There is another story that Hippolyta was killed as she fought at

Theseus's side by a javelin thrown by Molpadia, and that the column which stands near the sanctuary of Olympian Earth was set up in her honour. But it is hardly surprising that history should go astray when it has to deal with events so remote in time as these. There is, for example, another tradition that Antiope had the wounded Amazons secretly moved to Chalcis and nursed there, and that some were buried in that neighbourhood near what it now called the Amazoneum. However, we have at least some evidence that the war was ended by a treaty. The proof of this is the name of the place adjoining the Theseum, which is called Horcomosium, because of the oaths that were sworn there, and also the sacrifice which in ancient times was offered to the Amazons before the festival of Theseus.

The people of Megara also show a place in their country where Amazons were buried: it is on the way from the market square to the place named Rhus, where the so-called Rhomboid stands. Other Amazons are said to have died near Chaeronea and to have been buried by the banks of the little stream which in ancient times was apparently called Thermodon, but today has the name of Haemon. I have discussed the origins of these names in my life of Demosthenes.[1] And it appears that in Thessaly, too, the Amazons did not pass through unopposed, for their graves are pointed out to this day in the neighbourhood of Scotussa and Cynoscephalae.

28. So much, then, for the most important events in the story of the Amazons. There is, it is true, the so-called *Rising of the Amazons*, which was composed by the author of the *Theseid*, and tells how, after Theseus's marriage to Phaedra, Antiope and the Amazons who fought to avenge her attacked Theseus and were killed by Heracles, but this bears all too clearly the marks of a fable. Theseus certainly married Phaedra, but not until after the death of Antiope, by whom he had a son, Hippolytus, or Demophoön, as Pindar calls him. As for the terrible fate of Phaedra and Hippolytus, there is no contradiction between the versions of the historians and the tragic poets, and so we must suppose that it happened as all the tragedians represent it.

29. There are, however, other traditions about various marriages of Theseus which had neither an honourable beginning nor a happy ending, but these have never found their way on to the stage. For

1. *Demosthenes*, Ch. 19.

example Theseus is said to have carried off Anaxo, a girl from Troezen, and after killing Sinis and Cercyon to have ravished their daughters, and besides this to have married Periboea, the mother of Ajax, and later on Phereboea and Iope, the daughter of Iphicles. Then again it was because of his passion for Aigle, the daughter of Panopeus, that he is accused of having deserted Ariadne, as I have mentioned earlier, and this was neither an honourable nor even a decent action. Lastly, his kidnapping of Helen is said to have plunged Attica into war and brought about his own exile and his death. We shall return to this episode later.

Although there were many great exploits performed by the heroes of those days, Herodorus does not believe that Theseus played a part in any of them, except for fighting on the side of the Lapiths against the Centaurs. But there are other writers who claim that he not only went with Jason to Colchis but also helped Meleager to kill the Calydonian boar, and that his courage gave rise to the saying 'Not without Theseus'. They go on to say that he achieved many other noble exploits without the help of any companion, and that he inspired the phrase 'Here is a second Heracles'. He also helped Adrastus to recover the bodies of those who had been killed before the walls of the Cadmeia at Thebes, and he did this not by defeating the Thebans in battle, as Euripides makes out in *The Suppliants*,[1] but by persuading them to agree to a truce. This, at least, is what most writers say, and Philochorus adds that this was the first truce ever concluded for the purpose of recovering the bodies of the dead, although the stories written about Heracles mention that he was the first to restore the bodies of the dead to his enemies. The graves of the rank and file who fell before Thebes can be seen at Eleutherae, and those of the commanders near Eleusis, the latter burial being a favour which Theseus granted to Adrastus. What Euripides says about this in *The Suppliants*[2] is contradicted by Aeschylus in his *Eleusinians*,[3] where Theseus is brought on to tell the story as I have given it.

30. His friendship with Pirithous is said to have come about in this way. Theseus had won a great reputation for strength and courage and Pirithous wanted to put it to the test. So he drove Theseus's cattle

1. *Suppliants*, 653 ff.
2. *Suppliants*, 1213 ff.
3. Not extant.

away from the plain of Marathon, and when he found that the hero had taken up arms and set off in pursuit, he did not run away but turned and faced him. When they came in sight of one another, each was so struck with admiration for his opponent's person and courage that they refrained from fighting. Pirithous was the first to stretch out his hand; he then asked Theseus to make himself the judge of his robbery and declared that he would willingly submit to any penalty the other might inflict on him. At this Theseus not only let him off free, but invited him to be his friend and comrade in arms, and they sealed their friendship with an oath.

Later, when Pirithous was to marry Deidamia, he invited Theseus to the wedding to see the country and become acquainted with the Lapiths. He had also invited the Centaurs to the wedding feast, but as they became heated with wine, they grew insolent and began to lay hands on the women, whereupon the Lapiths instantly took revenge. They killed many of the Centaurs on the spot, and the rest they defeated in battle and drove out of their country, and Theseus fought on their side both at the wedding-feast and later in the war. Herodorus, however, gives a different account of this affair. He says that the war had already started when Theseus came to help the Lapiths, and that on his way there he saw Heracles for the first time. He had made a point of seeking him out at Trachis, where the hero was resting after his labours and long travels, and, according to Herodorus, the meeting took place with expressions of respect, goodwill, and generous praise on both sides. In spite of this, one might be more inclined to listen to those historians who say that the two heroes often met, and that it was at Theseus's desire that Heracles was initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries and was also purified before the initiation at his own request, on account of various headstrong actions he had committed.

31. Theseus was already fifty years old, so Hellanicus tells us, when he took part in the kidnapping of Helen, who was not yet of an age to marry. There are some writers who consider this the worst of all the charges against him, because of his age at this time. And so in the attempt to exonerate him, they make out that it was not he who carried off Helen, but Idas and Lynceus, who handed her over for Theseus to guard and look after, and that he then refused to surrender her to her brothers Castor and Pollux when they demanded her back; others, if you can credit this, say that her father, Tyndareus, entrusted

her to Theseus for fear of Enarsphorus, the son of Hippocoön, who was trying to take her by force while she was still a child. However, the most likely account, and the one on which most writers agree, runs as follows.

Theseus and Pirithous travelled to Sparta together, laid hands on the girl as she was dancing in the temple of Artemis Orthia, and escaped with her. Their pursuers did not follow them any further than Tegea, and so the two friends, when they had crossed the Peloponnese and were out of danger, struck a bargain with one another: whichever of them drew Helen by lot was to marry her, but must also help the other to find another wife. On this understanding they cast lots and Theseus won, but as the girl was still too young to marry, he took her to Aphidnae.[1] Here he placed her in his mother's company and entrusted both of them to the care of his friend, Aphidnus, telling him to guard them in absolute secrecy. Then, by way of repaying Pirithous's service, he travelled with him to Epirus to ask for the hand of the daughter of Aidoneus, the king of the Molossians, who called his wife Phersephone, his daughter Kore, and his dog Cerberus. Every prospective suitor was obliged to fight the dog and his daughter's hand was promised to whoever should be the victor. However, when Aidoneus found out that Pirithous and his friend had come there not to woo his daughter but to carry her off, he seized them both. He disposed of Pirithous by letting the dog kill him, but he kept Theseus in close confinement.

32. Meanwhile back at Athens, Menestheus, the son of Peteos, grandson of Orneus and great-grandson of Erechtheus, had taken a hand in affairs. He was the first man, they say, to cultivate the arts of the demagogue and to ingratiate himself with the people. He began by uniting the nobles and stirring up their resentment. They had long harboured a grudge against Theseus, because they felt that he had deprived each of the country magnates of his rule and authority and then herded them all into a single city, where he treated them as subjects and slaves. At the same time he also set the masses in a ferment with the accusations he brought against Theseus. He told them that while they might delude themselves with the dream of liberty, the truth was that they had been robbed of their native cities and their sacred rites, and all to make them look up to a single master

1. A town in Attica, some twenty miles north-east of Athens.

who was an immigrant and a foreigner, in place of the many excellent rulers of their own blood. While Menestheus was hard at work sowing discontent, the sons of Tyndareus marched against the city and the war did a great deal to help his revolutionary schemes; in fact some writers go so far as to say that it was he who induced the invaders to come.

At first they offered no violence, but merely demanded back their sister. But when the Athenians replied that she was not in their hands, nor did they even know where she had been left, then the war began in earnest. However, Academus, who had discovered by some means that Helen was hidden at Aphidnae, told them the secret. For this reason he was honoured by the sons of Tyndareus for the rest of his life, and on the many later occasions when the Spartans invaded Attica and devastated all the country round about, they spared the ground which is known as the Academy[1] for his sake. Dicaearchus, on the other hand, says that there were two Arcadians, Echedemus and Marathus, serving in the army of the Tyndaridae at this time, and that it was after the first of these that the present Academy was originally named Echedemia, while the second gave his name to the town of Marathon; this was because, in obedience to some oracle, he allowed himself to be sacrificed in front of the whole army.

The sons of Tyndareus came to Aphidnae, then, won a battle there and captured the town. It is said that Sciron's son, Alycus, who was fighting at that time in the army of the Dioscuri, was killed there, and that a place in Megara, where he was buried, bears the name of Alycus after him. However, Hereas writes that Alycus was killed at Aphidnae by Theseus himself,

> He whom Theseus slew on the broad plain of Aphidnae,
> Fighting for fair-haired Helen.

On the other hand it does not seem likely that Theseus was there himself when his mother and the town of Aphidnae were captured.

33. At any rate Aphidnae was taken and panic reigned in Athens. However, Menestheus persuaded the people to receive the sons of Tyndareus into the city and treat them hospitably. He pointed out that it was only with Theseus, who had been the first to commit

1. A grove near the river Cephissus about a mile north-west of Athens, where Plato and his disciples taught.

violence, that they were at war, but that to the rest of mankind they behaved as saviours and benefactors. And, indeed, their conduct confirmed what he said, for although they were now the masters of the whole city, the only demand they made was to be initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries, on the grounds that they had as close a connexion with the city as Heracles. This privilege was granted to them after they had been adopted by Aphidnus, just as Heracles had been by Pylius. They also received divine honours, such as are paid to the gods, and were addressed as *Anakes*. This title may have been derived from the fact of their having stopped the war, or else from the great care they took that nobody should suffer injury, even with so large an army inside the walls. Those who guard or take care of anything are said to do it *anakos*, and it may be that this is why kings are called *Anaktes*. Another explanation is that the sons of Tyndareus are called *Anakes* on account of the appearance of their twin stars in the heavens, because the Athenians use the words *anekas* and *anekathen* for *ano* and *anothen* to mean *above* or *on high*.

34. It is also said that Aethra, Theseus's mother who had been captured at Aphidnae, was carried off to Sparta and from there later to Troy, and Homer confirms this when he says that Helen was attended by

> Aethra, the daughter of Pittheus, and ox-eyed Clymene.[1]

Other people, however, reject this verse as spurious, as well as the story of Munychus, who is said to have been the illegitimate child of Laodice and Demophoon, and whom Aethra helped to bring up at Troy. On the other hand Ister, in the thirteenth book of his *History of Attica*, tells a very strange and quite different story about Aethra. There is a tradition, he says, that Paris was defeated in battle by Achilles and Patroclus on the banks of the river Spercheius in Thessaly, but that Hector captured and plundered the city of Troezen and carried off Aethra, who had been left there. But this seems a very unlikely tale.

35. Now while Heracles was being entertained by Aidoneus the Molossian, the king happened to mention the affair of Theseus and Pirithous, explaining to him what they had come there to do and how they had been punished when they were found out. Heracles was

1. *Iliad*, iii, 144.

shocked to hear how the one had died ignominiously, while the other was only waiting for death. He felt that it was useless to blame the king for Pirithous's fate, but he begged him to release Theseus and claimed this as a favour to himself. Aidoneus granted his plea and Theseus was set free and returned to Athens, where his friends had not yet altogether lost their power. All the sacred places which the city had previously set apart for him he now dedicated to Heracles, and he changed their names from Theseia to Heracleia, with only four exceptions, as Philochorus tells us. But when he attempted to set himself up as before as the head of the state, he found himself plunged into all kinds of disturbances and party strife. He discovered that the hatred of those who had been his enemies when he went away was now reinforced by contempt, and also that a great part of the people had been spoiled and now expected to be flattered into obeying his commands, instead of accepting them without question. When he tried to get his way by force, he found himself outmanoeuvred by demagogues and factions and finally, despairing of his prospects, he sent his children away secretly into Euboea to Elephenor, the son of Chalcodon. Then, after solemnly calling down curses upon the Athenians at Gargettus (where to this day the spot is named Araterion, or the place of curses) he sailed away to Scyros. He expected to be well received there, and he also owned some ancestral estates on the island. At that time Lycomedes was king of Scyros and Theseus applied to him to have his lands restored, as he intended to live there, although according to another account he asked the king to help him against the Athenians. But Lycomedes, either because he was afraid of a man of Theseus's reputation, or else because he wanted to do Menestheus a favour, led Theseus up to the highest point in the island under the pretext of showing him his estate from there, and then pushed him over the cliffs to his death. There is another story, however, that Theseus slipped and fell of his own accord while he was taking a walk, as his habit was, after his evening meal. At the time nobody paid much attention to his death. Menestheus was now king at Athens, while Theseus's sons served with Elephenor as private citizens on the expedition to Troy, but after Menestheus's death in the Trojan war, they returned by themselves and regained possession of the kingdom. In later times, however, there were various reasons which led the Athenians to honour Theseus as a demi-god; the most remarkable of these was the fact that many of the men who fought the Medes at Marathon believed

that they saw the apparition of Theseus, clad in full armour and charging ahead of them against the barbarians.

36. After the Persian wars, when Phaedo was archon,[1] the Athenians consulted the oracle at Delphi and were instructed by the Pythian priestess to bring home the bones of Theseus, give them honourable burial in Athens and guard them as sacred relics. It was a difficult task to discover the grave and take away the remains because of the inhospitable and savage temper of the Dolopians, who at that time were the inhabitants of Scyros. However, Cimon captured the island, as I have described in his *Life*,[2] and made it a point of honour to find the spot where Theseus was buried. He caught sight of an eagle, at a place which had the appearance of a mound, pecking at the ground with its beak and tearing it up with its talons, and by some divine inspiration he concluded that they should dig at this place. There they found a coffin of a man of gigantic size and, lying beside it, a bronze spear and a sword. When Cimon brought these relics home on board his trireme, the Athenians were overjoyed and welcomed them with magnificent processions and sacrifices, as though the hero himself were returning to his city. He lies buried in the heart of Athens near the place where the Gymnasium[3] now stands, and his tomb is a sanctuary for runaway slaves and all those who are poor and downtrodden and fear the strong, for Theseus all through his life was the champion and helper of the distressed and always listened kindly to the petitions of the poor. The principal sacrifice which the Athenians offer in his honour falls on the eighth day of the month Pyanepsion, the day on which he returned from Crete with the Athenian youths. Besides this day they also honour him on the eighth day of the other months, either because he originally came to Athens from Troezen on the eighth day of the month Hecatombaeon, as Diodorus the Topographer has recorded, or else because they regard this number as being peculiarly his own, as a reputed son of Poseidon. The reason for this is that they pay honours to Poseidon on the eighth day of every month. The number eight is the first cube of an even number and also the double of the first square. It is therefore an especially appropriate symbol for the immovable and abiding power of this god, whom we call the stay and upholder of the earth.

1. 476–475 B.C.
2. *Cimon*, Ch. 8.
3. Built by Ptolemy Philadelphus and described in Pausanias, i, 17.

2

SOLON

[*c.* 640/635 – after 560 B.C.]

* *
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DIDYMUS the grammarian wrote a reply to Asclepiades' treatise on Solon's tables of the law, in which he quotes Philocles' statement that Solon's father was Euphorion, but this contradicts the opinion of every other authority who has written about Solon. The others all agree that he was the son of Execestides, a man whose personal wealth and influence in Athens were modest enough, but who belonged to its most distinguished family, since he traced his descent from Codrus, one of the ancient kings of Attica. Solon's mother, so Heraclides of Pontus tells us, was a cousin of the mother of Pisistratus. The two men were at first great friends, partly because they were related and partly because of the youthful good looks of Pisistratus, to whom, according to some writers, Solon was passionately devoted. This may very well be the reason why at a later date, when they took opposite sides in politics, their antagonism never carried with it any harsh or vindictive feelings; on the contrary their earlier attachment still lingered in their hearts and kept alive the cherished memory of their affection:

> The embers of Zeus's flaming thunderbolt
> Still glowing[1]

as Euripides puts it. In Solon's poems, too, we can find evidence of the fact that he could not resist good looks and did not challenge love

> To meet him like a boxer in the ring.

He also proposed a law which forbade slaves to rub themselves dry with oil, to practise in the gymnasium or to have a boy lover, so that his intention was evidently to class this as an honourable and dignified

1. Euripides, *Bacchae*, 8.

practice and thus, in a sense, to recommend it to reputable men by the act of forbidding it to the unworthy. Pisistratus, too, is said to have had a boy lover named Charmus and to have dedicated the statue of Love in the Academy, where the runners in the sacred torch race light their torches.

2. Solon's father, according to Hermippus, dissipated a great deal of his estate in various acts of charity, but there was no lack of friends who would have been ready to help his son. Solon, however, coming as he did of a family which had always been accustomed to give help to others, was ashamed to accept any for himself, and so while he was still a young man, he ventured into commerce. On the other hand we are also told that he travelled to gain experience and to extend his knowledge rather than to make money. There is no doubt that he was a lover of knowledge, for even when he was far advanced in years he could still say

> I never cease to learn as I grow old[1]

and also that he was no great admirer of wealth, since he goes so far as to declare that two men are equally wealthy, even when one

> . . . has great possessions,
> Silver and gold and broad wheat-bearing acres,
> Herds and horses and mules: while the other's portion
> Is but his daily bread, clothes for his back,
> Shoes for his feet and a fair wife and child
> With a span of years to share their lives together.[2]

But elsewhere he writes:

> I long for wealth, but to win it by wrongful means
> I have no desire. Justice, though slow, is sure.[3]

There is, in fact, no necessity for an upright statesman to pay great attention to acquiring superfluous wealth, nor again to frown upon a reasonable sufficiency of it. In those times, as Hesiod tells us, 'work was no disgrace';[4] no trade carried with it any mark of inferiority and commerce could even win a man prestige, because it gave the merchant familiarity with barbarous countries and gained him the

1. Fragment 18.
2. Fragment 24.
3. Fragment 13.
4. *Works and Days*, 311.

friendship of foreign rulers and a wide experience of affairs. Some merchants even became the founders of great cities, such as Protis, for example, who won the friendship of the Gauls living along the Rhône and founded Marseille. It is said that both Thales and Hippocrates the mathematician engaged in trade, and Plato paid for the expenses of his stay in Egypt by selling oil.

3. The fact, then, that Solon was somewhat luxurious and extravagant in his way of living, and that in his verses he refers to pleasure more readily than one might expect of a philosopher, is generally put down to his mercantile career. He took many risks and expected compensations for these in the form of various pleasures and relaxations. But for all this it is plain from the following verses that he classed himself with the poor rather than with the rich:

> Often the wicked prosper, while the righteous starve;
> Yet I would never exchange my state for theirs,
> My virtue for their gold. For mine endures,
> While riches change their owner every day.[1]

He seems to have written his poetry[2] in the first place without any serious end in view and simply for his own amusement during his leisure. Later on he introduced philosophical aphorisms and wove a great deal of political matter into his poems, not only to provide a historical record, but also in some cases to justify his own acts, and in others to exhort, or warn, or rebuke the Athenians. Some writers say that he tried to express his laws in the form of epic verse before he published them, and they quote his introduction to them which ran as follows:

> First let us pray to Zeus, royal son of Cronos
> To grant my laws success and wide renown.[3]

In philosophy, like most of the wise men of that age, he was concerned above all with applying morals to politics. In physics his ideas are extremely elementary and old-fashioned, as is plain from the following verses:

1. Fragment 15.
2. The remains of Solon's poems are collected in Bergk's *Poetae Lyrici Graeci*. The references are to the fragments in that edition.
3. Fragment 13.

The drifting clouds let fall the snow and hail,
The thunder bursts from the dazzling lightning flash,
The sea is lashed to fury by the winds,
Yet, sleeping, it is the gentlest of the elements.[1]

Generally speaking, Thales seems to have been the only sage of that period who pursued his speculations beyond the limits of strictly practical problems; all the rest gained their reputation for wisdom from their prowess as statesmen.[2]

4. They are said to have all come together at Delphi and again at Corinth, where Periander arranged a kind of congress for them and gave a banquet. But what increased their reputation even more was the affair of the tripod, which circulated amongst them, passed through the hands of all seven and was declined by every one in turn, each striving to outdo the other in modesty and goodwill. The story goes that some men of Cos were hauling in a net and a number of strangers from Miletus purchased the catch before they had seen what was in it. It turned out to contain a golden tripod which, according to the legend, was thrown in there by Helen on her homeward voyage from Troy, in obedience to some ancient oracle. The Milesians began by quarrelling with the fishermen about the tripod, and then their respective cities took up the dispute and finally went to war. At this point the Pythian priestess of Apollo declared to both parties that the tripod must be given to the wisest of men. So it was sent first of all to Thales of Miletus, and the Coans willingly presented him personally with the object for which they had fought the whole population of Miletus. Thales, however, declared that Bias was a wiser man than himself, and the tripod was sent on to Bias, who again passed it on to another candidate wiser than himself. So it was declined and passed on by each sage in turn until it came to Thales for the second time. Finally, it was conveyed from Miletus to Thebes and dedicated to Apollo of the Ismenus, a nearby river.

According to Theophrastus, however, the tripod was first sent to Bias at Priene, and after that to Thales at Miletus at Bias's request. In this fashion it went the round of all the wise men, until it returned

1. Fragments 9 and 12.

2. The Seven Sages of Greece are generally accepted as having been Bias of Priene, Chilon of Sparta, Cleobulus of Lindos, Periander of Corinth, Pittacus of Mitylene, Solon of Athens, and Thales of Miletus.

once more to Bias and was eventually sent to Delphi. These, then, are the best known versions of the story, although some people say that the gift was not the tripod which is now to be seen at Delphi, but a bowl sent there by Croesus, and others that it was a drinking cup left there by Bathycles.

5. Solon is said to have had a private meeting with Anacharsis and one on another occasion with Thales, and the accounts we have of these run as follows. Anacharsis came to Athens, knocked on Solon's door and announced that he was a stranger who had arrived to make friends with him and enjoy his hospitality. Solon replied that it was better to make one's friends at home, to which Anacharsis retorted: 'Very well, you are at home! You can make me your friend and your guest.' Solon was impressed by his quick wit, welcomed him hospitably and entertained him for some while at his house. This was at a time when Solon was already involved in politics and was drawing up his laws. When Anacharsis discovered this, he laughed at Solon for supposing that his countrymen's injustice and greed could be kept within bounds by means of written laws, which were more like spiders' webs than anything else; he said that they would hold the weak and the small fry who might get entangled, but would be torn to pieces by the rich and the powerful. To this Solon replied, we are told, that men abide by their agreements when neither side has anything to gain by violating them, and that he was framing his laws for the Athenians in such a way as to make it clear that it would be to everybody's advantage to keep rather than to break them. However, the results turned out much more in accordance with Anacharsis's forecast than with Solon's hopes. It was Anacharsis, too, who remarked, after attending a session of the assembly, that he was amazed to find that in Greece wise men spoke on public affairs, but fools decided them.

6. When Solon went to visit Thales at Miletus, he is said to have shown his surprise that his host apparently had no desire to marry and raise a family. Thales said nothing at the time, but a few days later he arranged for a stranger to announce that he had just arrived after leaving Athens ten days before. When Solon asked whether anything new had happened there, the man, whose answers had been carefully rehearsed, told him: 'Only the funeral of a young man, who was followed to the grave by the whole city. He was the son, I heard, of one

of the leading citizens, who excelled all others in virtue, but the father was not present at his son's funeral. I was told that he had been travelling abroad for a long time.' 'Unhappy man!' exclaimed Solon. 'What was his name?' 'I heard the name,' the man said, 'but I forget it now, although there was a great deal of talk of his wisdom and justice.' In this way each one of his answers sharpened Solon's misgivings, and at last in great distress he told the stranger his name and asked whether it was Solon's son who had died. When the man answered that it was, Solon began to beat his head and act like a man overcome with passionate grief, but Thales took him by the hand and said with a smile, 'Now you can understand, Solon, what keeps me from marrying and having children; it is too much even for the most dauntless of men like yourself. But you need not upset yourself over this story. It is quite untrue.' This, at any rate according to Hermippus, is the story related by Pataecus, who boasted that he had inherited Aesop's soul.

7. At the same time it is surely an absurd and ignoble attitude for a man to give up all the things he may rightly claim, simply for fear that he may lose them. According to this reasoning, nobody would ever enjoy the possession of riches or fame or wisdom, in case he might one day be deprived of them. Even virtue, the greatest and most precious possession in the world, we often see banished by disease or by drugs. For that matter Thales, too, although he remained unmarried, could not entirely rid himself of fear, unless he refused to have relations or friends or a country at all: but in practice, we are told, he adopted his sister's son, Cybisthus. The truth is that every man's soul has implanted within it the desire to love, and it is as much its nature to love as it is to feel, to understand, and to remember. In this desire it clothes itself, and if it finds nothing to love at home, it will fasten upon some alien object; and just as happens to a house or an estate where there are no lawful heirs, so with this craving for affection, alien or illegitimate children move in and occupy it, and engage not merely our love, but even our fears and anxieties on their behalf. It is quite common, for example, to find men of a harsh temper who will argue against marriage and the procreation of children, but who, as soon as their servants' or concubines' children fall ill and die, will be tormented with grief and give way to the most abject lamentations, or others who suffer the most degrading and intolerable anguish even

at the death of dogs or horses. On the other hand there are men who have endured the death of noble sons without showing any extravagant grief or unworthy conduct, and have continued to be guided by reason all the rest of their lives. Those who have failed to learn how to fortify themselves with reason against the blows of fortune lay up endless troubles and fears for themselves, and it is not affection but weakness which brings this about. Such people cannot even enjoy what they long for when they get it, but allow themselves to be obsessed with continual anguish and anxieties and apprehensions, because they are forever anticipating some future loss. The wisest course is not to guard against the loss of our wealth by taking refuge in poverty, nor of our friends by rejecting friendship, nor of our children by having none, but rather to forearm ourselves with reason against every kind of misfortune. However, we have already said more than enough on this subject.

8. The Athenians had exhausted themselves with a long and harassing war against the Megarians for the possession of the island of Salamis, and finally they passed a law forbidding anybody in future, on pain of death, either to speak or write about reviving the Athenian claim to Salamis. Solon found this an intolerable humiliation, and he noticed that many of the younger men at Athens were eager for a pretext to declare war, but did not dare propose it on account of the law. He therefore pretended to have gone out of his mind, and his family put about the story in the city that he was insane. In the meanwhile he secretly wrote some elegiac verses, and when he had learnt them by heart, he suddenly rushed into the market-place with a small felt cap on his head. A large crowd gathered around him, and he then climbed on to the herald's stone and recited the poem which begins with the lines:

> I come as a herald from lovely Salamis
> To tell you, not with a speech, but with a song
> What must be done.[1]

The title of the poem is *Salamis* and it consists of a hundred gracefully turned verses. When Solon had sung it, there was a chorus of praise from his friends and Pisistratus, in particular, urged the people to act on his words. And so they repealed the law and went to war again and appointed Solon as their commander.

1. Fragment 1. Only eight lines of the poem have been preserved.

The popular version of the story then runs as follows. Solon sailed with Pisistratus to Cape Colias, where he found all the women of Athens performing the customary sacrifice to Demeter. He then sent a man he could trust to Salamis, who made himself out to be a deserter and told the Megarians to sail with him as quickly as they could to Colias, if they wanted to capture the women of the principal Athenian families. The Megarians fell into the trap and sent off a party of men in his ship. As soon as Solon saw the vessel coming over from the island, he ordered the women out of the way and arranged that those of the younger men, whose beards had not yet grown, should disguise themselves in the women's robes and head-dresses and sandals, carrying daggers concealed about them at the same time, and should dance and play on the beach until the enemy landed and the ship was within their grasp. All this was carried out according to his orders; the Megarians were lured on by the sight of the supposed women, ran their ship aground, and leaped out to seize them, scrambling over one another to be first. They were cut down to the last man and the Athenians at once sailed across and seized the island.

9. There is another tradition, however, that Salamis was not captured in this way, but that Solon first received the following oracle from the god at Delphi:

First sacrifice to the warriors who once had their home in this island,
Whom now the rolling plain of fair Asopia covers,
Laid in the tombs of heroes with their faces turned to the sunset,

and that in obedience to this command he sailed to Salamis at night and offered sacrifice to the heroes Periphemus and Cychreus. Then he chose from among the Athenians 500 volunteers, who had been promised by decree the chief posts in the administration of the island if they captured it. He set sail in a number of fishing boats escorted by a thirty-oared warship, and anchored off Salamis at a point on the coast which faces towards Euboea. Meanwhile the Megarians in the town of Salamis, who had heard only a confused report of what was happening, hurried to arms and set off for the place, and at the same time sent out a ship to observe the enemy's movements. As soon as the ship approached, Solon captured it and put the crew under guard. Then he manned her with the best of his volunteers, and ordered them to sail for the city, keeping themselves as much out of sight as poss-

ible. Meanwhile, with the rest of his Athenian force, he attacked the Megarians on land, and while this battle was still in progress the men in the ship surprised and captured the city.

This account seems to be borne out by a number of ceremonies which were established later on. In the performance of these an Athenian ship would sail up, first of all in silence, and then as they neared the shore, the crew would utter warlike shouts and one man in full armour would leap out with a cry of triumph and run to the headland of Sciradium to meet the force which was attacking by land. Near this spot stands the temple of Ares which Solon built, for he defeated the Megarians and all the survivors of the battle were released on parole.

10. Still in spite of these setbacks the Megarians carried on the war and each side inflicted great damage on the other, until they finally agreed to make the Spartans arbitrators and judges between them. Now most writers say that Solon on this occasion brought the weight of Homer's authority to bear on his side, for he inserted into the passage in *The Iliad* which contains the Catalogue of Ships the two verses:

> Twelve warships Ajax brought from Salamis
> And beached them close to the Athenian host[1]

and read these out before the court.

The Athenians themselves, however, hold that this story is nonsense and claim that Solon proved to the arbitrators that Ajax's sons, Philaeus and Eurysaces, became Athenian citizens, ceded their island to Athens and settled in Attica, one at Brauron and the other at Melite, and in fact there is a town called Philaidae named after Philaeus, to which Pisistratus belonged. They also say that Solon, in his efforts to weaken the Megarian case still further, made the point that the dead on the island of Salamis are buried in the Athenian not the Megarian fashion, for the Megarians bury their dead facing the east and the Athenians facing the west. Hereas the Megarian, on the other hand, denies this and maintains that the Megarians also turn the faces of their dead towards the west, and, more important still, he asserts that every Athenian has a tomb to himself, whereas the Megarians (like the early inhabitants of Salamis) place three or four bodies in

1. *Iliad* ii, 557–8.

each tomb. However, the story goes that Solon was also supported by various oracular pronouncements from Delphi, in which the god referred to Salamis as Ionian. The case was judged by five Spartans, Critolaïdas, Amompharetus, Hypsechidas, Anaxilas, and Cleomenes.

11. Solon's reputation and authority had already been greatly increased by these events. But he became still more admired and celebrated throughout the Greek world when he spoke out on behalf of the temple at Delphi and declared that the Greeks must not allow the people of Cirrha to profane the oracle, but must come to its rescue and help the Delphians to ensure that Apollo was still honoured there. It was on his advice that the Amphictyonic Council[1] went to war, as Aristotle, among others, confirms in his list of the victors at the Pythian games, where he gives Solon the credit for taking up this attitude. He was not, however, appointed general for this war, as Evanthes of Samos alleges (according to Hermippus). Certainly Aeschines the orator makes no such statement, and according to the records at Delphi it was Alcmaeon, not Solon, who commanded the Athenians.

12. Athens had long been troubled by the blood-guilt which it had incurred over the treatment of Cylon and his party. On that occasion Megacles, the archon, had induced Cylon and his fellow-conspirators, who had taken sanctuary in the temple of Athena, to come down and stand their trial.[2] The men had fastened a braided thread to the goddess's statue and kept hold of it so as to remain under her protection. But as they reached the shrine of the Furies on their way down from the Acropolis, the thread snapped of its own accord, whereupon Megacles and the other archons rushed up to seize them, on the pretext that the goddess had refused them the rights of suppliants. Those who were outside the sacred precincts were stoned to death, others who had fled for sanctuary to the altars were massacred there, and the only men to be spared were those who appealed as suppliants to the archons' wives. For this reason the archons were laid under a curse and were regarded with loathing by the people. Those of Cylon's

1. This represented the twelve peoples who had as common sanctuaries the temple of Apollo at Delphi and the temple of Anthela near Thermopylae.

2. About 636 B.C. See Herodotus, v, 71, Thucydides, i, 126.

partisans who survived built up a strong following again, and formed a permanent faction against the descendants of Megacles. At the time of which we are speaking this feud was at its height and the city was torn between the two factions. Accordingly, Solon, whose reputation now stood very high, came forward to mediate between them with the help of some of the most prominent Athenians, and by argument and entreaty prevailed upon those who were still under the curse to stand trial and be judged by a jury of 300 citizens, selected from the noblest families. Myron of Phlya was the prosecutor and Megacles' family was found guilty. Those members of it who were still alive were banished and the bodies of those who had died were dug up and cast out beyond the frontiers of Attica. In the midst of these disorders the Athenians were also attacked by the Megarians and they lost Nisaea and were again driven out of Salamis. At this time, too, the city became a prey to superstitious alarms and strange apparitions, and the seers declared that their sacrifices gave warning of various curses and defilements which demanded expiation.

In this situation they sent to Crete for Epimenides of Phaestus, who is regarded as the seventh of the Sages of Greece by those who do not admit Periander of Corinth to their number.[1] He was believed to be a man especially favoured by the gods and to be deeply versed in religious matters, particularly in everything relating to divine inspiration and mystic rites. For this reason his contemporaries said that he was the son of a nymph named Balte and they addressed him as a modern Cures, or Cretan priest of Zeus. When he arrived in Athens, he formed a friendship with Solon, gave him help in many ways and prepared the way for his legislation. He made the Athenians more punctilious in their religious worship and more restrained in their rites of mourning; he did this by immediately introducing certain sacrifices into their funeral ceremonies and by abolishing the harsh and barbaric practices in which Athenian women had indulged up to that time. But his greatest service, which he achieved by various rites of atonement and purification and by erecting places of worship, was to sanctify and consecrate the city and to make the people more amenable to justice and better disposed to live in harmony with one another. It is said that when he had seen Munychia,[2] the citadel of Piraeus, and

1. See note on p. 46.

2. This citadel was considered a stronghold of great strategic importance and was later garrisoned by various conquerors of Athens.

inspected it carefully for some time, he remarked to the bystanders: 'How blind men are to the future! If the Athenians could only know what misfortunes this place will bring on their city, they would devour it with their own teeth to be rid of it.' Thales is also reputed to have possessed a similar gift of foresight. He is said to have left instructions that he should be buried in a mean and neglected quarter of the city, and to have foretold that this would one day be the market-place of Miletus. At any rate, the Athenians had the greatest admiration for Epimenides and they offered him large sums of money and high honours, but he asked for nothing more than a branch of the sacred olive tree, and with this he returned home.

13. However, once the disturbances concerning Cylon were past and those involved in the blood-guilt had been banished, as I have described, the Athenians relapsed into their perennial squabbles about the form their government should take. The city was divided into as many parties as there were geographical features in its territory. The party of the Hill supported an extreme democracy, the Plain an extreme oligarchy, while the Shore formed a third party, which wanted a mixed form of government somewhere in between, opposed the other two and prevented either of them from getting the upper hand. At this point, too, the inequalities between rich and poor had, as it were, come to a head. The city stood on the brink of revolution, and it seemed as if the only way to put a stop to its perpetual disorders and achieve stability was to set up a tyranny. All the common people were weighed down with the debts they owed to a few rich men. They either cultivated their lands for them and paid them a sixth of the produce and were hence called Hectemorioi and Thetes, or else they pledged their own persons to raise money and could be seized by their creditors, some of them being enslaved at home, and others being sold to foreigners abroad. Many parents were even forced to sell their own children (for there was no law to prevent this), or to go into exile because of the harshness of their creditors. However, the majority, which included the men of most spirit, began to make common cause together and encourage one another not to resign themselves to these injustices, but to choose a man they could trust to lead them. Having done this, they proposed to set all enslaved debtors free, redistribute the land and make a complete reform of the constitution.

14. At this point the most level-headed of the Athenians began to look towards Solon. They saw that he, more than anyone else, stood apart from the injustices of the time and was involved neither in the extortions of the rich nor the privations of the poor, and so finally they appealed to him to come forward and settle their differences. Phanias of Lesbos, however, maintains that Solon of his own accord went behind the backs of both parties in order to save the city, and secretly promised the poor that he would redistribute the land, and the rich that he would guarantee the pledges which were their security. Solon's own version is that he only engaged in politics very unwillingly, because he was afraid of the grasping nature of the one party and the arrogance of the other. However, he was chosen archon[1] in succession to Philombrotus to act both as arbitrator and as legislator, for the rich were ready to accept him as a man of wealth and the poor as a man of principle. It is also said that a remark of his to the effect that 'equality breeds no strife' was widely repeated before his election and pleased property-owners and paupers alike; the first assumed that he meant an equality based on merit and achievement, and the second a quantitative equality based on the counting of heads. Consequently, both sides' hopes were raised and both sets of leaders repeatedly pressed upon Solon the idea of establishing a tyranny: they sought to persuade him that he could seize control of the city with all the greater confidence now that he had it in his power. There were many people, besides, who were not attached to either party and who saw that it would be a weary and laborious process to bring about any radical change by means of debate and legislation, and they were by no means unwilling to have a single man, the justest and wisest in the state, placed at the head of affairs. There are some who say that Solon received an oracle from Delphi, which ran as follows:

Seat yourself now amidships, for you are the pilot of Athens.
Grasp the helm fast in your hands; you have many allies in your city.

His intimate friends reproached him most of all for turning his back upon absolute power merely because he shrank from the name of tyrant, without allowing for the fact that the virtues of the man who assumed such authority could transform it at once into a lawful sovereignty. They quoted the earlier precedent of Tynnondas

in Euboea and the contemporary one of Pittacus, whom the people of Mitylene had chosen to be their tyrant.

None of these arguments could shake Solon's resolution. His reply to his friends, we are told, was that tyranny is a fine place in itself, but there is no way down from it, and in one of his poems he writes to Phocus:

And if I spared my country
Refrained from ruthless violence and tyranny
And chose to keep my name free from all taint
I feel no shame at this; instead, I believe
It will be my greatest glory.[1]

From this it seems clear that he enjoyed a great reputation, even before he became the lawgiver of Athens. As for the taunts that were hurled at him for refusing the tyranny, he has written as follows:

Solon was no deep thinker, not even a man of sound judgement;
When the gods showered good fortune upon him, he only refused it.
When his nets swarmed with fish, he could not pull them in for amazement.
Give me the chance to be tyrant, with such power and infinite riches
I should not turn it down, though I ruled but a day over Athens;
Then I could bear to be flayed and my name cast into oblivion.[2]

15. This is how he makes the unscrupulous elements and, indeed, the people in general speak of him. But in spite of his refusal to become a tyrant, he was by no means over-indulgent in his handling of affairs and there was nothing feeble about his legislation. It did not make concessions to the strong, nor did it humour the whims of the voters. Wherever he approved of the existing arrangement, he made no attempt to remedy or meddle with it, for he feared that if he turned everything upside down and thoroughly disorganized the state, he might not have power enough to restore order and reconstitute it for the best. He only introduced changes where he believed he could get his way by persuasion or enforce it by authority, and, in this fashion, as he puts it, he

Made force and justice work in harmony.

1. Fragment 32.
2. Fragment 33.

And so, when at a later date he was asked whether he had provided the best laws for the Athenians, his reply was, 'The best that they would accept.'

Later writers point out that the Athenians were in the habit of disguising the unpleasant aspects of things by giving them endearing and charitable names and finding polite equivalents for them. Thus they refer to whores as *mistresses*, taxes as *contributions*, garrisons of cities as *guards*, and the common gaol as *the residence*. Solon, it appears, became a pioneer of this device, when he referred to his cancelling of all debts as a *discharge*. The first measure which he put into force decreed that existing debts were wiped out and that in future nobody could accept the person of a debtor as security. Some writers, however, Androtion among them, maintain that Solon relieved the poor, not by wiping out their debts, but by reducing the interest on them, and that they were so delighted by this act of humanity, that they gave the name of 'discharge' not only to that decree, but also to the enlargement of various Attic measures and the rise in the value of money which took place at the same time.[1] Solon fixed the value of the mina at 100 drachmas, whereas it had previously consisted of seventy-three. In this way, although the actual amount of payment remained the same, its value was less, so that the debtors received a substantial benefit without their creditors being any the worse off. However, most writers agree that the so-called 'discharge' meant the abolition of pledges, and Solon's own poems support this interpretation, for in these he prides himself on having

> uprooted
> The mortgage stones that everywhere were planted
> And freed the fields that were enslaved before.[2]

He also speaks of bringing back from foreign countries some of the citizens whose persons had been seized for debt

> Who speak no more their native tongue,
> So far their wanderings in distant lands;
> And others who dwelt at home in shameful bondage . . .[3]

he says he set free.

This problem is said to have involved him in the greatest trouble of his whole life. When he had made up his mind to abolish the debts

1. See also Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, x, 1.
2. Fragment 36.
3. Fragment 36.

and was thinking over the best arguments to justify the measure and the best occasion for introducing it, he confided to his most intimate friends, Conon, Cleinias, and Hipponicus, that he did not intend to touch the land, but had decided to abolish debts. They promptly took advantage of this confidence and anticipated the decree by borrowing large sums from the rich and buying up big estates. Then, when the decree was published, they went on enjoying the use of their property but refused to pay their creditors. This affair gave rise to the most damning accusations against Solon and brought him into great discredit, for people could hardly believe that he was the victim of such a trick and concluded that he must have been a party to it. However, he was able to repudiate this charge at once by the well-known sacrifice he made of five talents; for it came to light that he had lent this amount and he was the first to comply with his own law by cancelling the debt. Some people, among them Polyzelus the Rhodian, say that the sum was fifteen talents. His friends, on the other hand, were for ever after known as *chreocopidae*, or swindlers.

16. At first, however, his policy did not please either party. The rich were angry at being deprived of their securities, and the poor even more so, because Solon did not carry out a redistribution of the land, as they had expected, or impose a strictly equal and uniform style of living upon everybody, as Lycurgus had done. But Lycurgus, it must be remembered, was the eleventh in direct descent from Heracles; he had reigned for many years in Sparta, enjoyed great prestige and possessed many friends and exceptional authority, all of which he knew how to employ in support of his policy. Lycurgus also relied on force rather than on persuasion, to such an extent indeed that he actually lost an eye,[1] but he did enact the most important measure for ensuring the safety and unity of Sparta, by making it impossible for any citizen to be either poor or rich. Solon, on the other hand, because his own fortune was modest and he was a man chosen by the people, did not achieve anything so far-reaching in his constitution; and yet, considering that his position rested on the will of the voters and their confidence in him, he certainly made full use of the power that was placed in his hands. Still, we have his own word for it in the following verses that he offended the majority, who had expected different results:

1. *Lycurgus*, Ch. II.

> . . . the people once placed
> Extravagant hopes in me, but now they are angry
> And look askance, as if I were their enemy.[1]

And yet if anyone else, he adds, had been granted the same power

> He would not have forborne nor stopped where I did,
> Till he had shaken up the laws of the state
> And skimmed the cream for himself.

However, it was not long before they saw the advantages of his policy, put aside their private complaints and offered a public sacrifice, which they called the *Seisachtheia*, or discharge of burdens, and they went on to appoint Solon to reform the constitution and draw up a code of laws. No limit was set to his powers and every function of the state was committed to his charge, the magistracies, the public assemblies, the courts of law and the Councils. He had authority to decide the property qualifications, the numbers and the times of meeting of each of these bodies and also to preserve or dissolve all existing institutions as he thought fit.

17. First of all, then, he repealed all the Draconian laws because of their harshness and the excessively heavy penalties they carried; the only exceptions were the laws relating to homicide. Under the Draconian code almost any kind of offence was liable to the death penalty, so that even those convicted of idleness were executed, and those who stole fruit or vegetables suffered the same punishment as those who committed sacrilege or murder. This is the reason why, in later times, Demades became famous for his remark that Draco's code was written not in ink but in blood. Draco himself, when he was once asked why he had decreed the death penalty for the great majority of offences, replied that he considered the minor ones deserved it, and so for the major ones no heavier punishment was left.

18. Secondly, Solon was anxious to leave all the offices of state as he found them, in the hands of the rich, but at the same time to give the masses a share in the other processes of government which they had never before possessed, and he therefore took a census of every citizen's property. Those who received an annual income of 500 measures or more of wet and dry produce, he placed in the first class and called

1. Fragment 34.

Pentacosiomedimni. The second class consisted of men who could afford a horse, or possessed an income of 300 measures, and these, because they paid a 'horse tax', were known as Knights. The third class were the *Zeugitai*, whose yearly income amounted to 200 measures of wet and dry produce. The rest of the citizen body were known as *Thetes*; they were not entitled to hold office and their only political function consisted in sitting in the Assembly or on a jury. This latter privilege appeared at first to be worth very little, but later became extremely important, because the majority of disputes were finally settled before a jury. Even in those cases which Solon placed under the jurisdiction of the magistrates, he also allowed the right of appeal to the popular court. He is said also to have framed the laws in obscure and contradictory terms and to have done this deliberately so as to increase the power of the popular courts. In consequence, since the parties to a dispute were unable to settle it according to the letter of the law, they were constantly obliged to resort to the juries and lay every disagreement before them, so that in a sense the jurors became the arbiters of the laws. Solon himself claims the credit for this in the following verses:

> To the mass of the people I gave the power they needed,
> Neither degrading them, nor giving them too much rein;
> For those who already possessed great power and wealth
> I saw to it that their interests were not harmed.
> I stood guard with a broad shield before both parties
> And prevented either from triumphing unjustly.[1]

Solon considered that the common people were still weak enough to need further protection, and so he gave every citizen the privilege of going to law on behalf of any one whose rights had been infringed. If a man was assaulted or suffered violence or injury, anybody who had the ability and the desire to do so was entitled to bring a suit and prosecute the offender. In this way the lawgiver wisely accustomed the citizens as members of one body to feel and sympathize with one another's wrongs. We are also told of a saying of Solon's which echoes the spirit of this law. He was apparently asked which city he considered the best governed of all, and his reply was 'The city where those who have not been wronged show themselves just as ready to punish the offender as those who have been.'

1. Fragment 5.

19. He established the Council of the Areopagus, which was composed of men who had held the annual office of archon, and as he had done so himself, he, too, became a member of this body. He then observed that the people were becoming restive and unruly because of their release from their debts, and he therefore formed a second chamber consisting of 400 men, 100 being drawn from each of the four tribes. Its functions were to deliberate public business in advance of the general assembly, and not to allow any matter to be brought before the people without its having been previously considered. He charged the upper chamber with the task of exercising a general supervision and acting as guardian of the laws. His object here was that the state with its two Councils should ride, as it were, at double anchor and should therefore be less exposed to the buffetings of party politics and better able to secure tranquillity for the people.

Now most writers agree that the Council of the Areopagus was constituted by Solon as I have explained above. This view seems to be strongly reinforced by the fact that Draco at no point makes any mention of the members of the Areopagus, but in all cases of homicide refers to the Ephetae. On the other hand Solon's thirteenth table contains his eighth law, which is set down in these very words:

All citizens who were disfranchised before the archonship of Solon shall recover their rights, except for those who were convicted either by the Areopagus, or by the Ephetae, or by the king-archons in the Prytaneum on charges of murder or manslaughter or attempting to set up a tyranny, and except also for those who were in exile when this law was published.

This surely points to the conclusion that the Council of the Areopagus existed before Solon's archonship and so before his legislation. For how could anybody have been condemned in the Areopagus before Solon's time if he was the first to give that court its powers of criminal jurisdiction? It may be that there is some obscurity or omission in the phrasing of the law, and that its meaning is that citizens convicted on charges coming under the jurisdiction of those who were members of the Areopagus, or Prytanes, or Ephetae when the law was published shall remain disfranchised, while those convicted on other charges shall regain their rights. However, the reader must decide this question for himself.

20. Among Solon's other laws there is one very peculiar and unexpected one, which decrees the disfranchisement of any citizen who, in the event of revolution, does not take one side or the other. Solon's intention was evidently that men should not remain indifferent or apathetic to the public interest or safeguard their private affairs while congratulating themselves upon having nothing to do with the disorders and misfortunes of their country; he wished instead to encourage them to attach themselves at once to the better cause, share its dangers, and give it their support, not to sit back in safety waiting to see which side would win. Another law, which seems out of place, and even ridiculous, is the one which permits an heiress, in the event of her lawful husband proving impotent, to marry one of his next of kin. Still there are some who say that this was a sound provision against men who are incapable of fulfilling the duties of a husband, but marry heiresses for the sake of their property and so exploit the law to do violence to nature. When such men see that the heiress may consort with whoever she chooses, they will either put an end to the marriage, or, if they persist in it, suffer disgrace for their greed and presumption. It was also wise to stipulate that the heiress should not be completely free in her choice of a consort, but should be limited to her husband's relatives, so that her child should belong to the same family. The same purpose, too, is served by Solon's direction that the bride and groom should be shut in the bridal chamber and should eat a quince together, and that an heiress's husband should have intercourse with her at least three times a month. Even though they have no children, this is a mark of honour and of affection which a man owes to a chaste wife; it removes many of the frustrations which arise in such cases and prevents their differences from bringing about a complete estrangement.

In all other marriages Solon abolished dowries. The bride was to bring with her nothing but three changes of clothes and some household possessions of small value. His object here was that marriage should not be a mercenary or profit-making institution, but that man and wife should live together for love, affection, and the procreation of children. Even Dionysius, the ruler of Syracuse, when his mother asked him to give her in marriage to one of his citizens, felt bound to reply that although he had broken his city's laws in making himself tyrant, he could not outrage the laws of nature by sponsoring so unseasonable a marriage. And indeed abnormalities such as these

should not be permitted in any state; we should not tolerate alliances which have neither love nor fitness to recommend them, which do not fulfil the function of marriage and indeed defeat its object. In fact a judicious magistrate or lawgiver, when he sees an old man who has chosen a young wife, might well quote to him the poet's words to Philoctetes:[1]

My poor fellow, a fine state *you* are in to marry!

And when he finds a young man in the house of some rich and elderly matron, growing plump like a cock-partridge from his attentions to her, he should take him away and settle him instead with some marriageable girl, who has no husband in prospect. So much, then, for this subject.

21. Another law of Solon's which is highly praised is the one forbidding anybody to speak ill of the dead, for piety requires us to regard the dead as sacred, justice to refrain from attacking the absent, and political wisdom to prevent the perpetuation of hatreds. He also forbade people to abuse the living in temples, courts of law, public offices, and during games or festivals. The penalty was a fine of three drachmas to be paid to the injured party and two more to the public treasury. Solon was mindful here that it is the sign of an undisciplined nature and of a lack of training never to be able to control one's temper; on the other hand to do so on all occasions is difficult and for some people impossible. The law, for its part, has to take account of what is practicable, if the legislator wishes to punish a few people effectually rather than a large number to no effect whatever.

Solon was also much admired for his law which deals with wills. Before his time wills were not permitted and the whole estate of the deceased was bound to remain within his family. Solon, however, by allowing any man who had no children to bequeath his property to whomsoever he chose, showed that he rated friendship above the ties of blood and free choice above necessity, and the effect of his law was to make every man's possessions truly his own. On the other hand he did not give people absolute freedom in drawing up their bequests, but prohibited those made under the influence of sickness or drugs or imprisonment, or extorted by compulsion or by the pressure exerted by a wife. He considered very rightly and properly that to be persuaded against one's judgement was no better than to be coerced, and

1. In a play of unknown authorship, not Sophocles' tragedy.

he rated fraud and compulsion, pleasure and pain in the same category, as being equally capable of upsetting a man's powers of reasoning. He also made a law which regulated women's appearances in public, as well as their mourning and their festivals, and put an end to wild and disorderly behaviour. When women went out of doors, they were not allowed to wear more than three garments, or to carry more than an obol's worth of food or drink, or a basket more than eighteen inches high, or to travel at night except in a waggon with a lamp in front of it. Besides this he abolished the practice of lacerating the flesh at funerals, of reciting set dirges, and of lamenting any person at the funeral ceremonies of another.[1] People were also forbidden to sacrifice an ox at the graveside, or to bury their dead with more than three changes of clothing, or to visit the tombs of others besides their own family except at the time of burial. Most of these practices are forbidden by our own laws in Chaeronea, but ours also provide that offenders shall be punished by the board of censors for women for weak and unmanly behaviour, and for carrying their mourning to extravagant lengths.

22. Solon observed that the city was filling up with people who now poured into Attica in a steady stream from every quarter because of the security of conditions there; at the same time he recognized that the country was for the most part poor and unproductive, and that seafaring peoples elsewhere are not in the habit of sending their goods to those who have nothing to offer in exchange. He therefore encouraged the Athenians to turn to the arts of manufacture and made a law that no son was obliged to support his father unless he had first been taught a trade. Now the problems which faced Lycurgus had been quite different. His country had no large influx of foreigners, and the territory it possessed was in Euripides' words

> ample for a great people
> With space enough, indeed, for twice as many.

Above all there was the great mass of Helots spread over the whole of Sparta, whom it was considered best to keep constantly employed so as to crush their spirit by perpetual toil and hardship. So it was all very well for Lycurgus to exempt his citizens from laborious or mechanical occupations and concentrate their attention exclusively

1. This refers to the practice of employing hired mourners.

upon fighting, giving them this one profession to learn and practise. But in Solon's case he had to make his laws conform to the situation, rather than the situation to the laws; he saw that the soil of Attica could yield no more than a bare subsistence to those who tilled it and could never support an idle and leisured proletariat, and so he set about investing the various trades with dignity and ordered the Council of the Areopagus to inquire into every man's means of livelihood and to punish those who had no occupation.

He took an even harsher step, so Heracleides of Pontus tells us, when he exempted illegitimate sons from the obligation of supporting their fathers. But we should remember that the man who chooses to disregard the honourable state of marriage is plainly taking to himself a woman, not for the sake of rearing a family but simply to indulge his own pleasure; this is his reward, and in dealing with his children he has left himself without a leg to stand on, since he has made them ashamed of having been born.

23. In general, however, Solon's laws concerning women seem incongruous to a degree. For example, he made it illegal to kill any adulterer who was caught in the act, but the offence of rape against a free woman was punished by a fine of no more than 100 drachmae. If the man seduced her, he would be fined twenty drachmae, except in the case of women who openly sell their bodies, courtesans, that is to say, for they come without any concealment to those who pay them. He also made it illegal for a man to sell his daughter or sister, unless he discovered that she was no longer a virgin. But it is surely quite absurd that the same offence should be treated in the one case with the most remorseless severity and in the other with the most genial tolerance, by the imposition of nothing more than a nominal fine, unless possibly money was so short in the city at that time that the difficulty of raising it made these penalties heavy. At any rate in the valuations which were drawn up for sacrifices, a sheep and a bushel of grain were reckoned at one drachma; a prize of 100 drachmae was awarded to a victor at the Isthmian games and one of 500 to a victor at Olympia. Five drachmae was the reward for anyone who brought in a wolf and one for a wolf-cub, and Demetrius of Phaleron records that these were also the prices for an ox and a sheep respectively. The prices for choice victims which Solon lays down in his sixteenth table are naturally many times higher than those paid for

ordinary beasts, but even so they are low compared with the prices of today. The Athenians from time immemorial had waged an unrelenting war against the wolf, because their lands were better suited for pasture than for arable farming. Some authorities say that the four Athenian tribes derive their names not from the sons of Ion, but from the various classes into which their occupations were divided. Thus the fighting men were named *Hoplites*, the craftsmen *Ergadeis*, and of the remaining two the farmers were called *Gelontes* and the shepherds and herdsmen *Aigikoreis*.

Attica cannot rely for her water upon rivers that flow all the year round, or upon lakes or abundant springs, but most of it comes from artificial wells. Solon therefore made a law that wherever there was a public well within a distance of half a mile, everyone should use that, but if the distance was greater they should dig one for themselves. But if, after digging to a depth of ten fathoms on their own land they still could not strike water, they were allowed to fill a vessel of six gallons twice a day at their neighbour's well, for Solon thought it his duty to help those in real need, but not to encourage the idle. The regulations which he laid down for the planting of trees also display an expert knowledge: nobody was allowed to plant a tree in a field within five feet of his neighbour's land, or within nine feet in the case of an olive or a fig tree. These spread their roots out farther and cannot be planted close to some trees without damaging them, because they absorb their nourishment and also give off a harmful exhalation. Anybody who wished to dig trenches or pits had to do so at a distance from his neighbour's land equivalent to their own depth, and bee-hives were to be placed at least 300 feet away from those of another owner.

24. Oil was the only product of Attica which Solon allowed to be exported, and he decreed that any offender against this regulation should be solemnly cursed by the archon, or else should pay 100 drachmae to the public treasury. This law is inscribed upon the first of his tables, so that there seems to be some evidence for the tradition that the export of figs was prohibited in ancient times, and that those who exposed or informed against such exporters were called *sycophants*, or 'fig-declarers'. He also made a law to deal with injuries suffered from beasts, which included an ingenious safety-device whereby a dog which had bitten anybody must have a collar and a

pole three feet long fastened to it and be delivered up to the injured party.

His law concerning naturalized citizens is a surprising one, because it granted naturalization only to those who had been permanently exiled from their own country, or who had emigrated with their families to Athens to practise a trade. Solon's object here, we are told, was not so much to discourage other types of immigrant as to invite these particular categories to Athens with the assurance that they could become citizens there. He also judged that one could safely rely on the loyalty of men who had been compelled to leave their country, and also of those who had left it with a definite end in view. Another characteristic item in Solon's legislation dealt with attendance at the public table, which was maintained in the Prytaneum; his word for the practice of eating there was *parasitein*. He did not allow the same person to dine there often, but on the other hand those who failed to attend when it was their duty to do so were punished. He regarded the behaviour of the first as grasping and of the second as showing contempt for the public interest.

25. All his laws were to remain in force for a hundred years, and they were inscribed upon *axones*, or wooden tablets which revolved with the rectangular frames containing them. Some small remains of these were still preserved in the Prytaneum in Athens in my time, and according to Aristotle they were known as *kurbeis*. There is also a passage somewhere in Cratinus the comic poet:

> By Solon and by Draco I give my word
> Whose tablets now are used to heat our barleycorns.

There are some writers, however, who say that the word *kurbeis* only belongs, strictly speaking, to those tablets which are concerned with sacred rites and sacrifices, and that the rest are called *axones*.

However this may be, the whole Council took a collective oath to ratify Solon's laws and each of the Thesmothetae, or guardians of the statutes, took a separate oath by the herald's stone in the market place, where each man swore that if he offended against these laws in any way he would dedicate to Delphi a golden statue of the same weight as himself.

Solon had taken note of the irregularity of the months and of the fact that the orbit of the moon is not exactly synchronized with the

rising and setting of the sun, but that it often overtakes and passes the sun on the same day. He therefore decreed that that day should be called the Old and the New, and that the part of it which had elapsed before the conjunction of the two should belong to the old month and the remainder to the month just beginning. He was thus apparently the first to interpret correctly the verse in the *Odyssey* which refers to a day when

The old month is ending and the new beginning[1]

and the following day he called the first of the month. After the twentieth of the month he did not reckon the days forwards but backwards, by subtracting them from thirty in a descending scale[2] on the same principle as the waning phases of the moon.

Once Solon's laws had been put into effect, people came to visit him every day, praising some of them and finding fault with others, or advising him to insert a certain provision here or to take out another there. A great many wanted to ask questions and cross-examine him on points of detail, and they kept pressing him to explain what was the object of this or that regulation. Solon saw that it was out of the question to meet such demands, but also that he would earn great ill-will if he turned them all down. He was anxious to disengage himself from these complications and thus escape the fault-finding and the captious criticism of his fellow countrymen, for as he remarks himself

In great affairs you cannot please all parties.[3]

So he made his commercial interests as a ship-owner an excuse to travel and sailed away after obtaining leave of absence for ten years from the Athenians, in the hope that during this period they would become accustomed to his laws.

26. He went first of all to Egypt and stayed for a while, as he mentions himself:

1. *Odyssey*, xiv, 162 and xix, 307, where the disguised Odysseus prophesies first to Eumaeus and then to Penelope that the missing king will return on that day.

2. Thus, what we would call the 21st became the 10th, the 22nd the 9th, etc., of 'the waning month'. The 29th was the 2nd of the waning month and the 30th 'the old and the new'.

3. Fragment 7.

where the Nile pours forth
Its waters by the shore of Canopus.[1]

He also spent some time studying and discussing philosophy with Psenophis of Heliopolis and Sonchis of Saïs, who were the most learned of the Egyptian priests. According to Plato[2] it was from them that he heard the legend of the lost continent of Atlantis, which he tried to introduce to the Greeks in the form of a poem. After this he sailed to Cyprus, where he was particularly warmly welcomed by Philocyprus, one of the local sovereigns. He was the ruler of a small city, founded by Demophon, the son of Theseus, and situated near the river Clarius. It was strongly placed for defence, but was inconvenient in other respects and possessed poor soil. Solon therefore persuaded him to transplant his people to the smiling plain which lay below, and build there a pleasanter and more spacious city. He stayed there himself, supervised the founding of the new city and helped to plan it in the most effective fashion, from the point of view of its amenities as well as its defence. The result was that many colonists flocked to Philocyprus, and he became the envy of the neighbouring kings. Because of this he paid Solon the honour of giving the city, which had previously been known as Aipeia, the new name of Soli. Solon himself refers to the founding of this place in the elegiac verses in which he addresses Philocyprus:

Long may you reign here over the Solii
And dwell in this city, you and your posterity.
As for me, let Cypris of the violet crown
Guide me to a safe voyage in my swift ship
As we sail away from her island, famed in story;
Let her bless and glorify your new-founded city
And grant me a happy return to my own country.[3]

27. As for his meeting with Croesus, there have been various attempts to prove on the grounds of chronology that this must have been an invention. However, when a story is so celebrated and is vouched for by so many authorities and, more important still, when it is so much in keeping with Solon's character and bears the stamp of his wisdom and greatness of mind, I cannot agree that it should be

1. Fragment 28.
2. *Timaeus*, 22a.
3. Fragment 19.

rejected because of the so-called rules of chronology, which innumerable authors have continued to revise, without ever being able to this day to reconcile their inconsistencies. At any rate the story goes that Solon came to visit Sardis at Croesus's invitation, and there experienced much the same feeling[1] as a man from the interior of a country travelling to the coast for the first time, who supposes that each river, as it comes into sight, must be the sea itself. In the same way Solon, as he walked through the court and saw many of the king's courtiers richly dressed and swaggering about amid a crowd of guards and attendants, thought that each of them must be Croesus, until he was brought to the king himself, whom he found decked out in jewels, dyed robes, and gold ornaments of the greatest splendour, extravagance, and rarity, so as to present a gorgeous and imposing spectacle. Solon, however, as he stood in his presence, neither showed any surprise at what he saw, nor paid any of the compliments Croesus had expected; indeed, he made it clear to those who had eyes to see that he despised such lack of taste and petty ostentation. The king then commanded that his treasure-chambers should be thrown open and his guest conducted on a tour of his magnificent household and his other luxuries. There was no need for this, since the sight of Croesus himself was enough to enable Solon to judge his character. However, when he had seen everything and was again brought before the king, Croesus asked him whether he had ever known anyone more fortunate than he. Solon said that he had, and mentioned the name of Tellus, a fellow Athenian. Tellus, he went on to explain, was an honest man, he had left behind him children who upheld his good name, he had passed his life without ever being in serious want, and he had ended it by dying gloriously in battle for his country. By this time Croesus had already come to regard Solon as an eccentric and uncouth individual, since he evidently did not regard a fortune in gold and silver as the criterion of happiness, but found more to admire in the life and death of an obscure private citizen than in all this parade of power and sovereignty. In spite of this he asked Solon a second time whether, after Tellus, he knew of any man more fortunate than himself. Solon again replied that he did, and named Cleobis and Biton, two men who had no equals in brotherly affection and in their devotion to their mother. Once, he told Croesus, when the carriage in which she was riding was delayed by the oxen, they harnessed

1. See also Herodotus i, 30–3.

themselves to the yoke and pulled her to the temple of Hera. All the citizens congratulated her and she was overjoyed, and then, after they had sacrificed and drunk wine, the two young men lay down and never rose again, but were found to have died a painless and untroubled death with their honours fresh upon them. By this time Croesus had lost his temper and burst out: 'So you do not include me among those who are happy at all?' Solon had no desire to flatter the king, but he did not wish to exasperate him further, and so he replied: 'King of the Lydians, the gods have given us Greeks only a moderate share of their blessings, and in the same way our wisdom is also a moderate affair, a cautious habit of mind, I suppose, which appeals to common people, not a regal or magnificent one. This instinct of ours tells us that human life is subject to innumerable shifts of fortune and forbids us to take pride in the good things of the present, or to admire a man's prosperity while there is still time for it to change. The future bears down upon each one of us with all the hazards of the unknown, and we can only count a man happy when the gods have granted him good fortune to the end. To congratulate a man on his happiness while he is still living and contending with all the perils of the mortal state is like proclaiming an athlete the victor and crowning him before the contest is decided; there is no certainty in the verdict and it may be reversed at any moment.' After delivering this warning, Solon took his leave. He had annoyed Croesus, but left him none the wiser.

28. It so happened that Aesop the writer of fables was in Sardis at that time, as Croesus had invited him and treated him with great honour. He was upset to hear that Solon had been so ungraciously received and offered him some advice. 'I suppose, Solon,' he remarked, 'when we talk to kings, we should tell them either as little as possible, or else what they most want to be told.' 'Not at all,' retorted Solon, 'either as little as possible, or else what they most need to be told.'

At that time, Croesus held an extremely low opinion of Solon. But later there came his struggle with Cyrus, at the end of which he was defeated in battle, his city captured, and he himself taken alive and condemned to be burned.[1] The moment came when he lay in chains on the pyre, with Cyrus and all the Persians looking on, and then he

1. See also Herodotus, i, 86.

cried out three times at the top of his voice, 'Solon, Solon, Solon!' Cyrus was astonished and sent men to ask him what man or god this Solon could be, that anyone in his hour of trial should call on him alone. Croesus then related the whole story and said: 'This man was one of the sages of Greece, and I sent for him not out of any desire to listen, or to learn the things I most needed to know, but to make him see and afterwards bear witness to the prosperity I enjoyed in those days. I know now that it is a greater calamity to lose that good fortune than it ever was a blessing to possess it. When it was mine, the only profit I had from it was fame and the opinion of others, but to have lost it has brought on me sufferings and afflictions that are only too real. It was Solon who foresaw then the shape of all that has come to pass, and who told me to look to the end of my life and not to put my trust or exult in uncertainties.'

All this was reported to Cyrus, and because he was a wiser man than Croesus, and saw in the example before him the very embodiment of Solon's words, he not only released Croesus but treated him with honour as long as he lived. In this way Solon earned the reputation of rescuing one king and educating another by means of a single speech.

29. While Solon was abroad, however, the people of Athens once more broke up into contending parties. The men of the Plain were led by Lycurgus, those of the Shore by Megacles the son of Alcmaeon, and those of the Hill by Pisistratus. His party included the mass of the Thetes, who held deeply felt grievances against the rich. The consequence of all this was that although Solon's laws were still in force, everybody expected a revolution to break out and wanted a different form of government. None of the parties thought of an equitable settlement, but each counted upon improving its position and overwhelming its opponents. This was the situation when Solon arrived back in Athens. Everyone revered and honoured him, but because of his years he no longer had the strength or the desire to speak and take an active part in public life as before. However, he had private conferences with the opposing party leaders and tried to reconcile them and bring them together, and on these occasions Pisistratus seemed more amenable than the others. He had a smooth and disarming manner of address, he was a great friend to the poor and behaved with reason and moderation even in his quarrels. He was able to simulate

those virtues which nature had denied him so impressively that he won more credit than those who actually possessed them. Besides this he had the reputation of being a cautious and law-abiding man, who set great store by equality and would not tolerate any attempt to upset the existing order or introduce changes into it. He completely deceived most people on these points, but Solon quickly discerned his true character and was the first man to detect his insidious plans. He did not, however, openly break with him, but tried to soften his disposition and influence him with advice. He went so far as to tell Pisistratus and others that if he could only rid himself of his passion to dominate and be cured of his craving for absolute power, there would be no more excellent citizen, nor one more naturally inclined to virtue in all Athens.

At this time Thespis was beginning to develop performances of tragedy and the novelty of his enterprise attracted most of the city to watch, although it had not yet been made the object of a regular competition. Solon had always been a good listener and ready to learn something new, and now in his old age had become even fonder of leisure and entertainment, and for that matter of wine and song, too, and so he went to watch Thespis act in his own play, as the ancient poets usually did. After the performance was over, he went up to Thespis and asked him whether he was not ashamed to tell such lies in front of so many people. When Thespis replied that there was no harm in speaking or acting in this way in make-believe, Solon struck the ground angrily with his staff and exclaimed, 'Yes, but if we allow ourselves to praise and honour make-believe like this, the next thing will be to find it creeping into our serious business.'

30. The day came when Pisistratus deliberately wounded himself,[1] drove into the market-place in a chariot and tried to rouse the people with the story that his enemies had organized a conspiracy to murder him because of his political programme. A crowd of sympathizers was beginning to utter angry shouts in his favour, when Solon approached them and said to him, 'Son of Hippocrates, this is not the way to play Homer's Odysseus. When he wounded himself, it was to deceive his enemies, the Trojans, but you are doing it to mislead your fellow-citizens!' Because of Pisistratus's trick, the people were ready to take up arms for him and they held a general meeting of the

1. See also Herodotus, i, 59.

Assembly, at which Ariston moved that Pisistratus should be granted a bodyguard of fifty men armed with clubs. Solon formally opposed the motion and used many of the arguments one can find in his poems,

> You hang upon the words of a crafty man

and again

> When you are managing your own affairs,
> Each of you is as clever as a fox on the run,
> But as soon as you come together, you lose your wits.

At length, however, Solon saw that the poorer classes were thoroughly roused and were determined to support Pisistratus, while the rich were too frightened to make any kind of stand against him. So he left the Assembly with a parting shot to the effect that he possessed more sense than the one party and more courage than the other; he was wiser than those who could not see through the plot, and braver than those who, although they were not taken in, were afraid to stand up to a tyrant. So the people passed the decree and did not place any strict limit on the size of Pisistratus's bodyguard, but allowed him to keep as many men as he liked and to march them about in public, until finally he seized the Acropolis.

When this had happened and the city was in an uproar, Megacles[1] immediately fled from Attica with the rest of the Alcmaeonidae. Solon, on the other hand, although he was by now a very old man and had no supporters, came to the market-place and harangued the citizens. He began by blaming them for their stupidity and cowardice and went on to put heart into them and appeal to them not to surrender their liberty. It was on this occasion, too, that he uttered the famous remark that it would have been easier at an earlier stage to forestall the tyranny while it was still being hatched, but that it was an even greater and nobler task to destroy it now that it was already established and fully grown. However, as no one had the courage to rally behind him, he retired to his own house, took out his arms and placed them in the street in front of his door, declaring, 'I have done all that was in my power to help my country and uphold its laws.'

Henceforth he lived in retirement, and when his friends begged him

1. The grandson of the Megacles involved in the massacre of Cylon and his partisans (see Ch. 12). He had been allowed to return from exile.

to leave Athens, he took no notice of them, but continued to write poems, in which he poured reproaches upon the Athenians:

> If you are suffering now through your own cowardice,
> You should blame yourselves and not the gods for this.
> No one but you has made the tyrant strong
> And that is why you are all slaves today.[1]

31. Many people warned him that the tyrant would kill him for these words, and when they asked him what gave him the confidence to throw all caution to the winds in this way, he answered, 'My old age.' But, in fact, once Pisistratus had established his position, he went out of his way to cultivate Solon. He treated him with kindness and respect and invited him to his house, until Solon actually became his adviser and approved many of his measures. He retained most of Solon's laws, observed them himself and obliged his friends to do the same. For example, after he had become tyrant he was summoned to stand trial before the Areopagus on a charge of murder, and duly presented himself there to make his defence, but his accuser did not appear. He also added a number of laws of his own, one of which provides that all those who have been disabled in war shall be maintained by the state. However, Heraclides of Pontus tells us that Solon had already passed a decree to this effect for the benefit of a disabled man named Thersippus, and that Pisistratus was merely following his example. But, according to Theophrastus, it was Pisistratus, not Solon, who devised the law against unemployment, which made the city more peaceful and the countryside more productive.

Solon also attempted to write a long poem[2] dealing with the story or legend of the lost Atlantis, because the subject, according to what he had heard from the learned men of Saïs in Egypt, had a special connexion with Athens. He finally abandoned it, however, not, as Plato suggests, for lack of time, but rather because of his age and his fear that the task would be too much for him. Certainly, as far as leisure is concerned, his own verses tell us that he had plenty of it:

> I never cease to learn as I grow old

and again

1. Fragment 11.

2. No trace of this has come down to us and the idea that he ever began such a work may be no more than a flight of Plato's fancy.

> But now I love the works of the Cyprian goddess
> And the blessings of Dionysus and of the Muses
> Which give delight to men.[1]

32. Plato was particularly ambitious to create an elaborate masterpiece out of the subject of Atlantis, as if it were a site on some fine estate, which was still unbuilt on, but to which he had a special claim by virtue of his connexion with Solon, and he began the task by laying out great porches and enclosures and courtyards on a magnificent scale, such as no story or myth or poetic creation had ever received before. But he was late in beginning and the task proved too long for his lifetime, so that the more we enjoy what he actually wrote, the more we must regret what he left undone. Like the great shrine of Olympian Zeus among the temples of Athens, so among the many beautiful works which Plato's vision conceived, the tale of the lost Atlantis is the only one to be left unfinished.[2]

According to Heraclides of Pontus, Solon lived on for many years after Pisistratus had made himself tyrant, but Phanias of Eresus maintains that he did not survive for more than two. Pisistratus first became tyrant during the archonship of Comeas,[3] and Phanias states that Solon died in the archonship of Hegestratus, who succeeded Comeas. The story that his body was burned and the ashes scattered on the island of Salamis seems too strange to be regarded as anything but a legend, but it is recorded by a number of respectable authorities and even by Aristotle the philosopher.

1. Fragment 26.
2. The fragment of the myth of Atlantis is contained in Plato's *Critias*.
3. 561–560 B.C.

3

THEMISTOCLES

[c. 525 – c. 460 B.C.]

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In the case of Themistocles[1] his family was too obscure to have lent him any distinction at the beginning of his career. His father was Neocles, a man of no particular mark at Athens, who belonged to one of the demes of Phrearrus and the tribe of Leontis. On his mother's side he was an alien, as her epitaph tells us:

> Abrotonon is my name
> A woman of Thrace, yet famous among the Greeks:
> I was the mother of Themistocles.

However, according to Phanias, Themistocles' mother was not a Thracian but a woman of Caria, and her name was not Abrotonon but Euterpe, while Neanthes even adds the name of the city she came from in Caria – that is, Halicarnassus.

The Athenians who, like Themistocles, came of mixed or alien parentage were enrolled at the gymnasium of Cynosarges. This stands outside the city gates and is sacred to Heracles, since he, too, was not a pure-bred deity, but was regarded as something of an alien in the company of the gods, because his mother was mortal. Themistocles persuaded a number of young men of good family to go out to Cynosarges and take their exercise there with him, and by this ingenious social manoeuvre he is believed to have done away with the discrimination between pure Athenians and those of mixed descent. In spite of his own alien origins, it is clear that he was also connected with the family of the Lycomidae, because when the shrine of initiation at Phlya which belonged to the Lycomidae was burned down by the Persians, he had it rebuilt and decorated with paintings at his own expense, as Simonides has told us.

1. It is probable that an opening sentence of this Life has been lost.

2. Still, however humble his birth, it is generally agreed that as a boy he was impetuous, naturally clever, and strongly drawn to a life of action and public service. Whenever he was on holiday or had time to spare from his lessons, he did not play or idle like the other boys, but was always to be found composing or rehearsing speeches by himself. These took the form of an impeachment or defence of the other children, so that his master remarked to him more than once: 'At least there will be nothing petty about you, my boy. You are going to be a great man one way or the other, either for good or evil.' In his studies, too, he was a slow and unwilling pupil at the kind of lessons which were intended to form the character or to teach any pleasing or graceful accomplishment. On the other hand his interest was immediately aroused by anything he was told which had a bearing on practical affairs or the improvement of his understanding: in short, he followed his natural bent in a way that was surprising in one so young.

In consequence, whenever in later life he found himself at any cultivated or elegant social gathering and was sneered at by men who regarded themselves as better educated, he could only defend himself rather arrogantly by saying that he had never learned how to tune a lyre or play a harp, but that he knew how to take a small or insignificant city in hand and raise it to glory and greatness. In spite of this Stesimbrotus asserts that Themistocles was a pupil of Anaxagoras and attended the lectures of Melissus the physicist. But here he is obviously mistaken in his dates, for when Pericles, who was much younger than Themistocles, was besieging Samos,[1] Melissus was the general who opposed him, while Anaxagoras was one of Pericles' intimate friends.

For this reason it is easier to believe the writers who say that Themistocles was an admirer of Mnesiphilus, a member of the same deme of Phrearrus. This man was neither an orator nor one of the so-called natural philosophers, but had made a special study of what at that time went by the name of 'wisdom'. This was really a combination of political acumen and practical intelligence, which had been formulated and handed down in unbroken succession from Solon, as though it were a set of philosophical principles. His successors combined it with various forensic techniques and transferred its application from public affairs to the use of language and were termed Sophists. It was Mnesiphilus, then, whom Themistocles made his mentor at the beginning of his political career.

1. 440 B.C.

In his early ventures as a young man, however, he was erratic and unstable. He allowed himself to follow his natural instincts, and when these are unchecked by reason or discipline they are apt to lead a man into violent extremes and then often themselves to deteriorate. Themistocles admitted as much in later life, when he said that it is the wildest colts which make the best horses, provided that they are properly broken in and trained. On the other hand the stories which various writers have connected with this phase of his career, namely that his father solemnly and publicly disinherited him and that his mother committed suicide out of grief at her son's disgrace, are generally believed to have been downright falsehoods. By contrast other writers have told us that his father tried to deter him from entering politics by pointing out to him the hulks of some old triremes lying abandoned on the sea-shore, and reminding him that this was how the people treated their leaders when they had no further use for them.

3. In spite of this there seems to be no doubt that Themistocles' longing for fame laid an irresistible hold on him, and that he was swiftly drawn into public affairs while he was still in the vigour of youth. From the very beginning he was seized with the desire to win the leading place in the state, so that he accepted without any hesitation the hostility of those who were already established at the head of affairs; in particular this brought him into collision with Aristides, the son of Lysimachus, who was constantly his opponent. It appears, however, that the feud between the two men had its roots in a rather puerile affair. According to Ariston the philosopher they were both rivals for the affections of the handsome Stesilaus, a native of Ceos, and afterwards they continued to be antagonists in public life, though no doubt the utter dissimilarity of their lives and characters must have widened the breach between them. Aristides was gentle by nature and of a conservative temperament. As a politician he cared nothing for personal popularity or reputation. His efforts were always aimed at securing the utmost advantage for the state that was consistent with safety and justice, and consequently he found himself compelled time and again to oppose Themistocles and make a stand against the growth of his influence, since the latter was constantly introducing sweeping reforms and inciting the people to fresh enterprises. It is said, in fact, that Themistocles was quite carried away by his yearning

for fame and that his ambition to play a part in great events had become a passion with him. So much so that although he was still quite a young man[1] when the battle of Marathon was fought against the barbarians,[2] and the whole country was ringing with the praise of Miltiades' generalship, it was noticed that he kept to himself and seemed completely wrapped up in his own thoughts. He could not sleep at night and he stayed away from the drinking-parties he normally attended. When people asked him in astonishment what had brought about this change in his habits, his answer was that he could not sleep for thinking of Miltiades' triumph. Now the rest of the Athenians supposed that the Persian defeat at Marathon meant the end of the war. Themistocles, however, believed that it was only the prelude to a far greater struggle, and he prepared, as it were, to anoint himself for this and come forward as the champion of all Greece: in fact he sensed the danger while it was still far away, and put his city into training to meet it.

4. In the first place he was the only man who had the courage to come before the people and propose that the revenue from the silver mines at Laurium,[3] which the Athenians had been in the habit of dividing among themselves, should be set aside and the money used to build triremes for the war against Aegina.[4] This conflict, at that moment the most important in all Greece, was at its height and the islanders, thanks to the size of their fleet, were masters of the sea. This made it all the easier for Themistocles to carry his point. There was no need to terrify the Athenians with the threat of Darius and the Persians, who were far away and whom few people seriously imagined would come and attack them; he had only to play upon the enmity and the jealousy the people felt towards the Aeginetans to make them agree to the outlay. The result was that the Athenians

1. Plutarch's chronology is contradictory throughout this Life. The theory which involves fewest contradictions would place Themistocles' birth about 525 B.C. A later date would make him too young to have been archon in 493 B.C.

2. 490 B.C.

3. These were worked by hereditary tenants, who handed over a fixed proportion of the yield to the state. In 484–483 B.C. the profits were unusually large and amounted to 100 talents.

4. 484–483 B.C.

built a hundred triremes with the money, and these ships actually fought at Salamis[1] against Xerxes.

After this he continued to draw on the Athenians little by little and turn their thoughts in the direction of the sea. He told them that their army was no match even for their nearest neighbours, the Boeotians, but that with the power they would command in their fleet they could not only drive off the barbarians, but become the leaders of all Greece. He turned them, to use Plato's phrase,[2] from steadfast hoplites into sea-tossed mariners, and he earned for himself the charge that he had deprived the Athenians of the spear and the shield and degraded them to the rowing bench and the oar. What is more he succeeded, as Stesimbrotus tells us, in forcing through this policy in spite of the opposition of Miltiades.

Whether in accomplishing this he really did harm to the original strictness and simplicity of the Athenian constitution, I am content to allow the philosophers to decide. The fact remains that the Greeks were saved at that time by their prowess at sea, and that it was these very triremes which won back the city of Athens after it had fallen. Xerxes' own actions are the proof of this, and not the only one. For although his land forces were intact, he took to flight after the defeat of his ships because he believed that he was no longer a match for the Greeks, and he left behind Mardonius, not, in my opinion, in the hope of subduing them, but of hindering their pursuit.

5. Some writers tell us that Themistocles never missed an opportunity to make money, and that his grand style of living made this necessary because he liked entertaining and lavishing money on his guests and therefore needed a generous income. Others, on the contrary, accuse him of being stingy and avaricious and say that he used to sell even the provisions that were sent to him as presents. When Philides the horse-breeder was asked by him for a colt and refused to give him one, Themistocles threatened that he would soon turn his home into a wooden horse, hinting by this that he would get his own relatives to bring charges against him and would stir up lawsuits between him and his own household.

No man was ever more ambitious than Themistocles. While he was still young and quite unknown, he prevailed upon Epicles of

1. 480 B.C.
2. *Laws*, iv, 706.

Hermione, a harp player who was greatly admired by the Athenians, to come and practise at his house, because he wanted the honour of having many people seek out his home and come there often to see him. Again, when he went to Olympia, he annoyed the Greeks by trying to rival Cimon in the dinners he gave and in the magnificence of his furniture and the tents in which he entertained his visitors. People were prepared to excuse this kind of extravagance in Cimon because he was young and belonged to a great family. But coming from a man who had neither made himself a reputation nor possessed the means to support these expenses, such an attempt to raise himself above his station was regarded as sheer imposture. On another occasion he was the sponsor of the winning tragedy in the dramatic contest at Athens, which even at that date excited the keenest interest and competition, and he had a tablet put up to commemorate his victory, which read: 'Themistocles of the deme of Phrearrus was the choregus, Phrynichus wrote the play, Adeimantus was archon.'

In spite of all this he stood high in the affections of the people, for he knew every one of the citizens by name and he showed himself a reliable arbitrator in private lawsuits which were settled out of court. Thus on one occasion, when Themistocles was serving as general, Simonides of Ceos asked him to stretch a point in his favour and Themistocles told him: 'You would be a poor poet if you sang out of tune, and I should be a poor magistrate if I did people favours contrary to the law.' Another time he made fun of Simonides by pointing out that it was nonsense for him to attack the Corinthians because they lived in a great and handsome city, while at the same time he had portraits made of a face as ugly as his own. All this while he continued to build up his power and increase his popularity with the Athenians, until he finally secured the triumph of the party he led and got Aristides banished by ostracism.[1]

6. The Persian king had already started his descent on Greece while the Athenians were still debating whom they should appoint as their commander. All the other candidates, it is said, were so alarmed at the danger that they declined to be considered, with the sole exception of Epicydes, the son of Euphemides and one of the popular leaders, a

1. Aristides' ostracism in 483–482 B.C. was the culminating stroke in a period of intense party warfare. Megacles had been ostracized in 486 and Xanthippus in 484.

clever speaker but a man of cowardly spirit, who was notoriously open to bribery. He set himself to secure the post and it seemed extremely likely that he would be elected. Themistocles was afraid that if the leadership fell into such hands it would mean utter disaster for Athens, and so he arranged to bribe Epicydes and bought off his ambition.

Themistocles was also greatly admired for the example he made of the interpreter, who arrived with the envoys from the Persian king to demand earth and water in token of submission. He had this interpreter arrested and put to death by a special decree of the people, because he had dared to make use of the Greek language to transmit the commands of a barbarian. He was praised, too, for his treatment of Arthmius, who came from Zeleia, a town in the Troad. At Themistocles' instance this man, together with his children and his family, was outlawed for bringing with him Persian gold and offering it to Greeks. But the greatest of all his achievements was to put an end to the fighting within Greece, to reconcile the various cities with one another and persuade them to lay aside their differences because of the war with Persia. In this task he is said to have been greatly helped by Chileos, the Arcadian.

7. As soon as he had taken up his command, his first step was to make the citizens man their triremes and urge them to leave the city and meet the barbarians at sea as far away from Greece as possible. But this plan was strongly opposed, and so he joined forces with the Spartans and led out a large army to the vale of Tempe, which they intended to make the first line of defence, since at that time nobody knew that Thessaly was about to declare for Xerxes. After a short while, however, the army withdrew from this position without accomplishing anything, and thereupon the Thessalians went over to the enemy and were followed by all the rest of Greece down as far as Boeotia. The Athenians were now at last more inclined to listen to Themistocles' advice to fight by sea, and he was sent with a fleet to guard the straits at Artemisium.

It was here that the rest of the Greeks called upon Eurybiades to become their commander-in-chief and the Spartans their leaders, but the Athenians, since they supplied more ships than all the rest of the allies put together, refused to serve under the orders of another people. Themistocles immediately saw the danger of disagreement at

this stage: he therefore surrendered his own command to Eurybiades and soothed the Athenians' pride by promising them that if they proved their valour in the fighting, he would guarantee that the rest of the Greeks would accept their leadership later on. For this action Themistocles is generally regarded as the man most directly responsible for saving Greece, and also for earning for the Athenians the reputation of surpassing their enemies in courage and their allies in wisdom.

When the Persian fleet arrived at Aphetae, Eurybiades was appalled to learn the number of ships that he had to face. And when he also discovered that another 200 vessels were sailing round beyond the island of Sciathos to take him in the rear, his immediate impulse was to take the shortest way back into Greece, reach the Peloponnese and there use his land forces to screen the fleet, for he regarded the Persians as invincible at sea. This in turn alarmed the Euboeans, who were afraid that the rest of the Greeks might abandon them, and they got into touch with Themistocles secretly and sent Pelagon to him with large sums of money. Themistocles, according to Herodotus, accepted the money and gave it to Eurybiades.[1]

Among his own countrymen the bitterest opposition he encountered came from Architeles, the captain of the sacred state galley, who was anxious to sail back to Athens because he did not have enough money to pay his crew. So Themistocles stirred up the feelings of Architeles' men against him to such a pitch that they made a rush at him and snatched away his dinner. Then while Architeles was still nursing his indignation and chagrin at this, Themistocles sent him a box containing a dinner of bread and meat and under it a talent of silver. He told Architeles to eat his dinner at once and look after his crew in the morning, otherwise he would denounce him publicly for accepting money from the enemy. This is the story we are told by Phanias of Lesbos.

8. The battles which now followed against the Persian fleet in the straits of Euboea did not decide the final issue of the war, but the experience gained in them was of inestimable value to the Greeks. They learned from their own behaviour in the face of danger that men who

1. Herodotus' version (viii, 5) is that Themistocles was given 30 talents, out of which he gave Eurybiades 5 and Adeimantus the Corinthian 3, and kept the rest himself.

know how to come to close quarters and are determined to give battle have nothing to fear from mere numbers of ships, gaudily decorated figure-heads, boastful shouts, or barbaric war-songs: they have simply to show their contempt for these distractions, engage the enemy hand to hand and fight it out to the bitter end. Pindar seems to have understood this well enough, when he wrote of the battle of Artemisium:

> That great fight where the brave sons of Athens planted the shining
> Cornerstone of their freedom . . .

for there is no doubt that courage is the foundation of victory.

Artemisium is one of the beaches of Euboea which stretches away to the north above Hestiaea. On the Thessalian shore opposite lies Olizon, in the territory which was once ruled by Philoctetes. Here there is a small temple of Artemis, named Proseoea, or 'towards the east', which is surrounded by trees and by a ring of upright slabs of white marble. This stone, if you rub it with your hand, gives off the colour and odour of saffron. On one of these slabs the following elegiac verses are engraved:

> Here, by this arm of the sea, the valiant children of Athens
> Sailed their ships into battle and shattered the fleets of the Mede.
> Conquering a many-tongued host from the farthest confines of Asia.
> These are the tokens of thanks to victorious Artemis paid.

There is also a place on the beach where deep down, mingled with the thick sand, you can find a dark ashy powder, which seems to have been produced by fire, and it is believed that the wrecks and dead bodies were burned here.

9. However, when the news of Thermopylae was brought to Artemisium and the Greeks learned that Leonidas had fallen and that Xerxes now commanded the passes, they withdrew southwards into Greece, with the Athenians guarding the rear because of the courage they had shown, and full of pride at their exploits in the battle. As Themistocles sailed along the coast, whenever he saw places where the enemy would have to land or put in for shelter or for supplies, he left messages conspicuously inscribed on the stones, some of which he found on the spot, while others he arranged to have set up by the likely anchorages and watering-places. In these inscriptions he appealed to the Ionians to come over, if they found the opportunity, to

the side of the Athenians, who were their ancestors and who were risking everything for their liberty: if this was impossible, they should do their utmost to hinder the barbarians in battle and throw them into confusion. By these tactics he hoped he might either bring the Ionians over to his side, or else create chaos by making the barbarians suspect them.

Meanwhile, although Xerxes had marched up from Doris into Phocis and was burning and destroying the Phocian cities, the Greeks did not come to their rescue. The Athenians, it is true, pressed them to make a stand in Boeotia and protect Attica, just as they themselves had gone out by sea to fight in defence of the rest of Greece at Artemisium, but nobody would listen to them; instead, the remainder of the allies refused to budge from the Peloponnese. They were anxious to concentrate all their forces west of the Isthmus of Corinth and began to build a wall across it from sea to sea. The Athenians were furious at this betrayal, but at the same time felt thoroughly disheartened and dejected at being thus abandoned to their fate. They could not seriously think of engaging so vast an army by themselves, but the only choice which was now left them – namely to give up their city and entrust their very existence to the fleet – seemed utterly repugnant. The majority felt that they did not want victory on these terms and that safety meant nothing to them if it required that they should abandon the temples of their gods and the tombs of their forefathers to the enemy.

10. At this point Themistocles, seeing no hope of winning over the people to his plans by any power of human reasoning, set to work to influence them with oracles and signs from heaven, just as a poet introduces a *deus ex machina* into his tragedy. He seized upon the episode of the snake, which is believed to have disappeared at this time from its sacred enclosure on the Acropolis, and treated it as a divine portent. When the priests discovered that the first-fruits of sacrifice which were offered to it every day had been left untouched, they gave out to the people on Themistocles' instructions that the goddess Athena had abandoned her city and was showing them their way to the sea. In his efforts to sway the people he again invoked the famous oracle from Delphi,[1] and insisted that the 'wooden wall' could only refer to their ships and that Apollo had spoken of Salamis

1. See Herodotus, vii, 141.

in his verses as divine, not as terrible or cruel, for the very reason that its name would one day be associated with a great blessing for the Greeks. At last he got his way and thereupon proposed a decree that the city should be handed over to the keeping of its patron goddess, Athena, but that all men of military age should be embarked on the warships, after everyone had provided as best they could for the safety of their wives, children, and slaves. As soon as the decree was passed, most of the Athenians sent their wives and children to Troezen, where the citizens vied with one another in welcoming them. They even voted to maintain the refugees at the public expense; they gave each family two obols a day, allowed the children to pick the fruit wherever they pleased as soon as it was ripe, and went so far as to pay schoolmasters to teach them. These measures were proposed by a man named Nicagoras.

At this moment the Athenians were without any public funds, and according to Aristotle it was the Council of the Areopagus which gave an advance of eight drachmae[1] to each fighting man, and so was mainly instrumental in getting the triremes manned. However, Cleidemus claims that this, too, was achieved by a trick on Themistocles' part. He says that as the Athenians were in the midst of abandoning their city and moving down to the Piraeus, the Gorgon's head which ornamented the breastplate of Athena's statue was found to be missing. Under the pretence of searching for it, Themistocles proceeded to have everything ransacked and discovered large sums of money hidden away in the baggage; these were confiscated and served to provide ample subsistence for the men embarking on the ships.

In this way the whole city of Athens put out to sea. It was a sight which filled some with pity and others with amazement at the hardihood of what they were doing, as they sent off their families in one direction and themselves crossed over to Salamis, unmoved by the cries and tears and embraces of their own kin. Most pathetic of all were the old men, who were left behind because of their years, and the domestic animals, too, who chose this moment to show a heart-rending affection and ran along howling piteously by the side of their masters as they went on board. The story has come down to us of the dog which belonged to Xanthippus, Pericles' father, and which could not bear to be separated from him, and so leaped into the sea, swam across the straits alongside his master's trireme, and was washed

1. The equivalent of about twenty-four days' pay.

ashore at Salamis, where it fainted and died on the spot. Its tomb, they say, is the place which is named the Dog's Mound, and is still pointed out to this day.

11. These were great achievements of Themistocles on any count. But in addition he had the insight to recognize that the Athenians longed to bring back Aristides,[1] and were afraid that in his anger with them he might go over to the barbarians and ruin the Greek cause, for he had been defeated by Themistocles' party and ostracized several years before the war. So Themistocles proposed a decree to grant permission for anyone who had been banished for a term of years to return and join his fellow-citizens in doing his utmost by word and deed for the deliverance of Greece.

Because of the prestige of Sparta the Greek fleet was under the command of Eurybiades, but he showed little determination in the face of danger and was anxious to hoist sail for the Isthmus, where the Peloponnesian army was concentrated. Themistocles, however, opposed this plan and it was then that he uttered a remark which became famous. Eurybiades had said to him: 'You know, Themistocles, at the games they thrash anybody who starts before the signal', to which Themistocles replied, 'Yes, but they do not crown anybody who gets left at the post.' Then, when Eurybiades lifted up his staff as if to strike him, Themistocles said, 'You may hit me if you like, but you must listen to me.' Eurybiades was forced to admire his self-possession and told him to speak out, and Themistocles then tried to lead him back to the subject. At this point somebody objected that a man without a city had no right to press those who still possessed one to abandon it and forsake their country, whereupon Themistocles turned on him and retorted, 'It is quite true, you wretch, that we have given up our houses and our city walls, because we did not choose to become enslaved for the sake of things that have no life or soul. But what we still possess is the greatest city in all Greece, our 200 ships of war, which are ready now to defend you, if you are still willing to be saved by them. But if you run away and betray us, as you did once

1. According to Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens* xxii. 8, Aristides was recalled during the archonship of 481–480 B.C., i.e., before June 480 at latest. At any rate his return was not delayed until the few weeks which separated Thermopylae and Salamis and he may have been appointed to a command before the campaign opened.

before, the Greeks will soon hear the news that the Athenians have found themselves as free a city and as fine a country as the one they have sacrificed.'[1] When he heard Themistocles speaking in this tone, Eurybiades began to reflect and was frightened at the thought that the Athenians might sail away and abandon him. Again, when one of the Eretrians tried to oppose him, Themistocles cut in: 'What, are we going to be lectured on how to fight by your people, who are like the cuttle-fish, with nothing but a long pouch in the place where your heart ought to be?'

12. Some writers say that while Themistocles was engaged in this argument on the deck of his ship, an owl was seen to fly from the right[2] of the fleet and perch at his masthead. This omen lent further weight to his words and the Greeks began to prepare for battle. Presently, however, the enemy's fleet arrived off Attica and occupied the bay of Phalerum and the great host of their ships quite blotted out the surrounding coastline. The king also came down to the sea in person with the land forces and could actually be recognized with the assembled army, and at the sight of this vast concentration of forces, Themistocles' advice was swept out of mind and the Peloponnesians once more cast their eyes longingly towards the Isthmus. They would not listen to any other plan but decided to withdraw that very night, and the pilots were given their sailing orders. Themistocles was enraged at the prospect that the Greeks might throw away all the advantages of their position in these narrow waters and scatter to their various cities, and so he cast around for a counter-stroke and hit upon his celebrated trick with Sicinnus.

This man was a Persian prisoner of war, but he was devoted to Themistocles and was also the tutor of his children. He was sent to Xerxes secretly and told to give him the following message: 'Themistocles, the Athenian commander, has come over to the king's side and wishes to be the first to tell him that the Greeks are trying to slip away; he urges the king not to let them escape but to attack them and destroy their naval power, while they are still disorganized and before they have joined forces with their land army.' Xerxes was delighted

1. Herodotus (viii, 62) quotes Themistocles as having threatened that the Athenians would remove themselves to Siris in Italy.

2. While Roman augurs faced south, the Greeks faced north. Hence lucky omens (which came from the east) were on the right.

with this news, which he believed had been sent him in all good faith, and he immediately issued orders to his commanders. The main body of the fleet was to be manned at leisure, but 200 ships were to sail at once, surround the strait on all sides and bar the passages between Salamis and the neighbouring islands, to prevent any of the Greeks from escaping.

While this manoeuvre was being carried out, Aristides the son of Lysimachus, who was the first to learn about it, came to Themistocles' tent. The two men were anything but friends – indeed, it was actually Themistocles, as I have explained, through whose efforts he had been ostracized – but Aristides now arrived to warn him, as he stepped out of his tent, that the Greeks had been encircled. Themistocles knew his opponent for a frank and noble character at all times, but he especially admired his coming at this moment; so he let him into the secret of the scheme he was carrying on with Sicinnus, and appealed to Aristides as a man who commanded more confidence among the allies than himself, to join him in the effort to keep the Greeks at their stations and encourage them to fight a battle in the straits. Aristides praised Themistocles for what he had done and proceeded to go the round of the other generals and captains, urging them to join battle. While they were still wondering whether to believe his news, a Tenian trireme commanded by Panaetius, which had deserted from the enemy, arrived and left them in no doubt that they were now surrounded, so that in the end anger played its part as well as necessity, as the Greeks set out to face their danger.

13. At daybreak Xerxes took his seat on some high ground, which enabled him to overlook his fleet and its order of battle. According to Phanodemus this place was situated above the temple of Heracles, at the point where the island of Salamis is separated from the mainland of Attica only by a narrow channel, but Acestodorus says that the king's point of vantage was near the Megarian frontier, above the hills known as 'The Horns'. A golden throne had been set up for him and a crowd of secretaries were in attendance, whose duty it was to record the events of the battle.

Meanwhile, Themistocles was offering sacrifice alongside the admiral's trireme. Here three remarkably handsome prisoners were brought before him, magnificently dressed and wearing gold ornaments. They were reported to be the sons of Sandauce, the king's

sister, and Artaynctus. At the very moment that Euphrantides the prophet saw them, a great bright flame shot up from the victims awaiting sacrifice at the altar and a sneeze was heard on the right, which is a good omen. At this, Euphrantides clasped Themistocles by the right hand and commanded him to dedicate the young men by cutting off their forelocks and then to offer up a prayer and sacrifice them all to Dionysus, the Eater of Flesh,[1] for if this were done, it would bring deliverance and victory to the Greeks. Themistocles was appalled at this terrible and monstrous command from the prophet, as it seemed to him. But the people, as so often happens at moments of crisis, were ready to find salvation in the miraculous rather than in a rational course of action. And so they called upon the name of the god with one voice, dragged the prisoners to the altar, and compelled the sacrifice to be carried out as the prophet had demanded. This, at any rate, is the account we have from Phanias of Lesbos, who was a philosopher and well read in history besides.

14. In his tragedy *The Persians*, the poet Aeschylus writes of the numbers of the barbarian ships as though he knew these for a fact:

> But Xerxes, as I know well, had a thousand ships
> At his command; the vessels built for speed
> Numbered two hundred and seven, so stands the count.[2]

The Athenian contingent was 180 strong and each ship had eighteen men to fight on deck, four of these being archers and the rest infantrymen.

Themistocles appears to have chosen the time for the battle as judiciously as he had the place. He was careful not to let the triremes engage the barbarian ships head on, until the time of day when the wind usually blows fresh from the sea and sends a heavy swell rolling through the narrows. This breeze was no disadvantage to the Greek ships, which were comparatively small and lay low in the water, but it caught the Persian vessels, which were difficult to manoeuvre with their high decks and towering sterns, and swung them round broadside on to their opponents, who dashed in eagerly to the attack. The Greek captains kept a watchful eye on Themistocles, because they felt that he saw most clearly what were the right tactics to follow, and also

1. Dionysus had this title because of the tradition of tearing and eating of raw, and even live, flesh at the Bacchic orgies, as in Euripides' *Bacchae*.
2. *Persians*, 341–3.

because he had ranged opposite him Xerxes' admiral, Ariamenes, a man of great courage, who was both the most stalwart and the most high-principled of the king's brothers. He was stationed on a huge ship, from which he kept discharging arrows and javelins, as though he were on the wall of a fortress. Ameinias of Decelea and Socles of the deme of Paeania, who were both sailing in the same vessel, bore down upon his and met it bows on, and as the two ships crashed into each other and were held by their bronze beaks, Ariamenes tried to board their trireme; but the two Athenians faced him, ran him through with their spears, and pitched him into the sea. Artemisia, the queen of Caria, recognized his body, as it floated about with the wreckage, and she had it brought to Xerxes.

15. At this point in the battle it is said that a great light suddenly shone out from Eleusis and a loud cry seemed to fill the whole breadth of the Thriasian plain down to the sea, as though an immense crowd were escorting the mystic Iacchus in procession. Then, from the place where the shouting was heard, a cloud seemed to rise slowly from the land, drift out to sea, and descend upon the triremes. Others believed that they saw phantoms and the shapes of armed men coming from Aegina with hands outstretched to protect the Greek ships. These, they believed, were the sons of Aeacus, to whom they had offered prayers for help just before the battle.[1]

The first man to capture an enemy ship was Lycomedes, the commander of an Athenian trireme, who cut off the Persian's figure-head and dedicated it to Apollo the Laurel-bearer at Phlya. The rest of the Greeks now found themselves on equal terms with their enemies, since the Persians could only bring a small part of their whole fleet into action at a time, as their ships constantly fouled one another in the narrow straits; and so, although they held out till the evening, the Greeks finally put them to utter rout. Thus they gained 'that noble and famous victory', as Simonides says, 'the most glorious exploit ever achieved at sea by Greek or barbarian, and they owed it to the courage and determination of all those who fought their ships, but not least to the surpassing skill and judgement of Themistocles.'

16. After the battle, Xerxes, who was still enraged at his failure, tried to construct moles, so as to block up the straits and lead his land forces

1. See Herodotus, viii, 64.

over to Salamis against the Greeks. Then Themistocles, by way of testing Aristides' opinion, made a show of urging the Greeks to sail with the fleet to the Hellespont and break down the bridge of boats. 'In this way,' he said, 'we could take Asia without stirring out of Europe.' Aristides was not at all in favour of this suggestion and replied: 'So far, the barbarian we have been fighting has taken life very easily. But if we shut him up in Greece and drive this man, who is master of such enormous forces, to extremities by frightening him, he will not go on sitting under a golden canopy quietly taking in the spectacle of our battles. He will nerve himself for anything, and because of his danger he will play an active part on each occasion, correct the mistakes he made before and take better advice on every issue. In fact, instead of breaking down the bridge which is there already, Themistocles, we ought to build another alongside it, if we can, and speed the man out of Europe with the least possible delay.' 'Very well, then,' said Themistocles, 'if we agree on that, it is high time we were considering and contriving some means to get him out of Greece as quickly as we can.'

As soon as this plan was adopted, Themistocles dispatched one of the royal eunuchs named Arnaces, whom he had picked out among the prisoners of war. This man was to tell Xerxes that the Greeks, now that they were masters of the sea, had decided to sail up to the Hellespont and destroy the bridge of boats there, but that Themistocles, out of his regard for the king, urged him to hurry back to his home waters and cross over into Asia. Meanwhile, he himself, so he declared, would arrange various delays for the allies and make them lose time in their pursuit. Xerxes was thoroughly alarmed when he heard this, and at once set about arranging his withdrawal. How shrewdly Themistocles and Aristides acted was proved later on in the campaign against Mardonius, for the battle of Plataea was one in which the Greeks stood in danger of losing everything, even though they were only fighting against a fraction of Xerxes' army.

17. Herodotus tells us[1] that of all the Greek states Aegina received the palm for valour, and that of the men who took part in the battle everyone, in effect, awarded the highest honour to Themistocles, although their jealousy made them unwilling to admit this. When the generals retired to the Isthmus and took their ballots from the altar of

1. viii, 93.

Poseidon[1] there, each one declared that the first place for bravery belonged to himself and the second to Themistocles. After this the Spartans brought him down to their country with them. They gave Eurybiades a prize for valour, but Themistocles one for wisdom – it was a crown of olive in each case – and they also presented him with the finest chariot in the city and sent a guard of 300 picked young men to escort him to the frontier. It is related, too, how at the next Olympic games, when Themistocles entered the stadium, the audience took no further interest in the competitors, but spent the whole day gazing at him, pointing him out to strangers and admiring and applauding him as they did so. Themistocles was delighted at this and admitted to his friends that he was now reaping the fruit of all his labours for Greece.

18. Certainly he carried ambition to its furthest limit, if we may judge by the stories about him which have been handed down. For example, when the Athenians had elected him admiral, he would refuse to settle any public or private business as it came up, but would postpone everything until the day appointed for sailing; he did this in order to deal with an immense quantity of business all at once and have meetings with many different kinds of people and thus make himself out to be a person of great importance and power. On another occasion, when his eye fell on a number of Persian corpses, which had been washed up along the sea-shore, and he saw that many of them were ornamented with gold bracelets and collars, he passed by them himself but pointed them out to a friend who was following him, with the words, 'Help yourself! You are not Themistocles!' He said to Antiphates, who had been a handsome young man, and who at that period had treated Themistocles with disdain, but afterwards had cultivated him because of the fame he had earned, 'Well, my boy, time has taught both of us a lesson, even if we have left it late.' He used to say of the Athenians, too, that they did not admire or honour him for himself, but treated him like a plane-tree; when it was stormy, they ran under his branches for shelter, but as soon as it was fine, they plucked his leaves and lopped his branches. Another time, a man from Seriphos told him that he did not owe his great reputation to his own

1. This was the most solemn method of casting a vote. It was intended to enhance the impartiality of the verdict, as though the votes were being cast in the presence of the gods.

efforts at all, but to his city. 'Very true,' retorted Themistocles, 'I should never have become famous if I had been a Seriphian, and neither would you if you had been an Athenian!'

On another occasion, one of his fellow generals, who believed that he himself had rendered great service to the state, began to behave arrogantly towards Themistocles and to compare their achievements. Themistocles answered him: 'The-day-after-the-Festival once started a quarrel with the Festival-day and said, "You provide nothing but anxiety and trouble, but when I come along, people can enjoy at their leisure everything they have been getting ready beforehand." The Festival-day's answer was, "True, but if I had not come first, you would not have come at all." So it is with us. If Themistocles had not been there on the day of Salamis, where would all the rest of you be now?'

He once said jokingly that his son, who was spoiled by his mother and through her by himself, was more powerful than any man in Greece, 'for the Athenians command the Greeks, I command the Athenians, his mother commands me, and he commands her.' He took pleasure in being different from everybody else, and so when he put up a certain estate for sale, he ordered the crier to announce that it had an excellent neighbour into the bargain. And when two suitors presented themselves for his daughter's hand, he chose the more worthy in preference to the richer, saying that he would sooner have a man without money than money without a man. Such was his character as it was revealed in his talk.

19. No sooner were these great achievements behind him, than he immediately took in hand the rebuilding and fortification of Athens; according to Theopompus's account he bribed the Spartan ephors not to oppose his plans, but most writers agree that he outwitted them. He arranged a visit to Sparta, giving himself the title of an ambassador, and the Spartans then complained to him that the Athenians were fortifying their city, while Polyarchus was sent expressly from Aegina to confront him with this charge. Themistocles, however, denied it and told them to send men to Athens to see for themselves; this delay, he calculated, would gain time for the fortifications to be built, and he was also anxious that the Athenians should hold the envoys as hostages for his own safety. This was just how things turned out. The Spartans, when they discovered the truth, did not retaliate against him, but concealed their resentment and sent him away.

After this he proceeded to develop the Piraeus as a port, for he had already taken note of the natural advantages[1] of its harbours and it was his ambition to unite the whole city to the sea. In this he was to some extent reversing the policy of the ancient kings of Attica, for they are said to have aimed at drawing the citizens away from the sea and accustoming them to live not by seafaring but by tilling and planting the soil. It was they who had spread the legend about Athena, how when she and Poseidon were contesting the possession of the country, she produced the sacred olive tree of the Acropolis before the judges and so won the verdict. Themistocles, however, did not, as Aristophanes the comic poet puts it, 'knead the Piraeus on to the city':[2] on the contrary, he attached the city to the Piraeus and made the land dependent on the sea. The effect of this was to increase the influence of the people at the expense of the nobility and to fill them with confidence, since the control of policy now passed into the hands of sailors and boatswains and pilots. This was also the reason why the platform of the people's Assembly in the Pnyx, which had been built so as to look out to sea, was later turned round by the Thirty Tyrants, so that it faced inland, for they believed that Athens' naval empire had proved to be the mother of democracy and that an oligarchy was more easily accepted by men who tilled the soil.

20. But Themistocles had even more ambitious schemes in mind for making Athens supreme at sea. After Xerxes' withdrawal, when the Greek fleet had put in at Pagasae and was drawn up on shore to winter there, he made a speech to the Athenians in which he told them that he had a plan which promised not only security but great advantages for Athens, but which could not be mentioned in public. The Athenians told him to confide it to nobody but Aristides, and if he approved, then it should be carried out. So he explained to Aristides that his scheme was to burn the whole Greek fleet where it lay. Thereupon Aristides came forward and told the people that no proposal could be more profitable, or at the same time more outrageous, and the Athenians then ordered Themistocles to give it up.

When the Greek states met at the Amphictyonic Congress, the Spartans put forward a motion that all those states which had not

1. It possessed naturally sheltered harbours. Before this the Athenian navy had been beached on the unprotected shore of Phalerum bay.

2. *Knights*, 815.

taken part in resisting the Persians should be debarred from membership. Themistocles was afraid that if the Spartans succeeded in expelling the Thessalians, the Argives and the Thebans from the Congress, they would gain complete control of the votes and be able to carry whatever measures they pleased. He therefore spoke in defence of these cities and won over the majority of the delegates to his side by pointing out that only thirty-one states had played an active part in the war, and that most of these were very small ones, so that it would be an intolerable situation if the rest of Greece were excluded and the Congress dominated by the two or three largest states. It was the stand he took on this occasion which gave particular offence to the Spartans, and made them try to strengthen Cimon's position by showing him favours and thus establish him as a political rival to Themistocles.

21. He also incurred the hatred of the allies by sailing round the islands and trying to extort money from them. For example, when he demanded money from the people of Andros, Herodotus[1] tells us of the exchange which took place. Themistocles told them that he had brought with him two gods, Persuasion and Compulsion, to which the islanders replied that they also had two great divinities, Poverty and Scarcity, who prevented them from giving him money.

Timocreon, the lyric poet of Rhodes, attacks Themistocles very sharply in a song, in which he says that, in return for a bribe, Themistocles arranged for certain exiles to be restored, but abandoned him, although the poet was his host and a friend, and that this was all done for money.

> Others may praise Pausanias in their songs
> Or brave Xanthippus, or Leotychidas.
> My choice is Aristides, the one true man
> To come from holy Athens. We know that Leto,
> Who loves the truth, detests Themistocles
> That liar, cheat, and traitor, who broke his word
> And, for a sordid bribe, refused to restore
> His host Timocreon to his native Rhodes.
> But pocketed three silver talents, no less
> And then sailed off. Well, he has his reward.
> Now he has brought back some who never deserved it,
> While some are banished, and others done to death,

1. Herodotus, viii, 111.

But always he lines his purse, and at the Isthmus
Plays the great host – and the great laughing-stock –
With that cold banquet he gave, where all the guests
Ate, and then prayed he would come to no good end.

But after Themistocles had been condemned and exiled, Timocreon abused him far more extravagantly and outrageously in the poem which begins:

Go then, my Muse,
Make my song known from end to end of Hellas,
Justice demands no less.

The story goes that Timocreon had been banished on a charge of having collaborated with the Persians and that Themistocles joined in condemning him. So when Themistocles in his turn was also accused of 'medising', Timocreon composed these verses:

Timocreon was not the only Greek
To make a deal with the Persians: many more
Were no less guilty: other foxes too
Have lost their tails.

22. At last even his fellow citizens reached the point at which their jealousy made them listen to any slander at his expense, and so Themistocles was forced to remind the Assembly of his achievements until they could bear this no longer. He once said to those who were complaining of him: 'Why are you tired of receiving benefits so often from the same men?' Besides this he gave offence to the people when he built the temple of Artemis, for not only did he style the goddess Artemis Aristoboule, or Artemis wisest in counsel – with the hint that it was he who had given the best counsel to the Athenians and the Greeks – but he chose a site for it near his own house at Melite. This is the place where today the public executioners cast out the bodies of executed criminals and leave the clothes and halters of those who have hanged themselves. A small statue of Themistocles used to stand in this temple of Artemis Aristoboule even down to my own times, and to judge by this he must have been a man not only of heroic spirit but of heroic appearance.

So at last the Athenians banished him.[1] They made use of the ostracism to humble his great reputation and his authority, as indeed was their habit with any man whose power they regarded as oppress-

1. About 472 B.C.

ive, or who had risen to an eminence which they considered out of keeping with the equality of a democracy. They did not regard ostracism as a punishment, but rather as a means of appeasing and blunting that spirit of envy, which delights in bringing down the mighty and finds an outlet for its own rancour in this penalty of disfranchisement.

23. After he had been banished from Athens and was living at Argos, the affair of Pausanias[1] gave Themistocles' enemies a handle against him. The man who indicted Themistocles for treason was Leobotes, the son of Alcmaeon of the deme of Agraule, and the Spartans joined in the impeachment. While Pausanias was negotiating his treasonable plot, he concealed it at first from Themistocles, although the two men were personal friends. But when he saw the latter banished from his country and full of resentment, he ventured to invite Themistocles to become a partner in his negotiations, showed him a letter from the king of Persia and tried at the same time to stir up his anger against the Greeks, whom he spoke of as ungrateful wretches. Themistocles rejected this approach from Pausanias and refused to be associated with him in any way, but he did not report their conversations to anyone else, nor did he denounce Pausanias's plans. He seems to have expected that Pausanias would either give them up of his own accord, or else that he would betray himself in some other way, seeing that he was pursuing such wild and desperate projects with a complete lack of judgement.

This was the reason why, after Pausanias had been put to death, certain letters and documents came to light which threw suspicion on Themistocles. The Spartans raised an outcry, and those of the Athenians who were jealous of him also launched their accusations. Themistocles could not defend himself in person, but he did so in writing and dwelt at length on the earlier charges that had been brought against him. His enemies, he pointed out, were slanderously accusing him of being a man who constantly sought authority over others, but was not prepared either by temperament or by choice to obey it himself. But if this were true, he could never have sold himself and Greece to barbarians, still less to his country's enemies. However, in

1. The Greek commander-in-chief, not content with the arrogant behaviour described in *Aristides*, Ch. 23, was discovered by the Spartans to be plotting with Persia. He fled for sanctuary to the Brazen House in Sparta and was starved to death there (see Thucydides, i, 128–34).

spite of anything he could say, his accusers prevailed with the people, and officers were sent to arrest him and bring him to stand his trial before the Pan-Hellenic Council.

24. Themistocles, however, got word of this in advance and crossed over to Corcyra, where he had been recognized as a public benefactor of the city. When he had been chosen to arbitrate in a dispute between Corcyra and Corinth, he had solved it by announcing as his verdict that the Corinthians should pay an indemnity of twenty talents and that the island of Leucas should be administered as a joint colony of both cities. From Corcyra he fled next to Epirus, and as the Athenians and Spartans still pursued him, he decided to gamble upon a difficult and almost desperate chance by taking refuge with Admetus, the king of the Molossians. This ruler had once approached the Athenians with some request, and Themistocles, then at the height of his power, had humiliated him by refusing it. Admetus had never forgiven him for this and had made it clear that he would take his revenge if Themistocles ever fell into his hands. Still, in the present state of affairs, Themistocles feared the jealousy of his own people, which had just been aroused, more than any long-standing grievance of the king's. He therefore threw himself upon the latter's mercy, by making himself a suppliant to Admetus in a peculiar fashion which is found in no other country. He took the king's young son in his arms and prostrated himself before the hearth, this being the form of supplication which the Molossians consider the most solemn and which it is virtually impossible to refuse. Some people say that it was Phthia, the king's wife, who had suggested this form of entreaty to Themistocles, and that she placed her child on the hearth with him, and others that it was Admetus himself who arranged it beforehand and played this scene with Themistocles, so as to put himself under a religious obligation not to deliver him up to his pursuers.

Epicrates of Acharnae smuggled Themistocles' wife and children out of Athens to join him in Epirus, and for this action, according to Stesimbrotus, he was afterwards prosecuted by Cimon and put to death. But a little later Stesimbrotus in some way or other either forgets this episode himself or makes Themistocles forget it, and tells us that he sailed to Sicily and asked for the hand of the daughter of the tyrant Hiero, promising to make the Greeks subject to him, but that Hiero refused him and so he then sailed for Asia.

25. This account seems an unlikely one. For Theophrastus in his treatise *On Royalty* tells us that when Hiero sent horses to race at Olympia and set up a lavishly decorated pavilion there, Themistocles made a speech to the assembled Greeks, inciting them to tear down the tyrant's building and to prevent his horses from competing. And Thucydides[1] tells us that Themistocles made his way across Greece to the Aegean, and sailed from Pydna without any of his fellow-passengers knowing who he was, until the ship was driven by a storm to Naxos, which was then being besieged by the Athenians.[2] Themistocles thereupon took fright and revealed himself to the owner and the captain of the vessel. But partly by entreaties and partly by the threat that he would denounce them to the Athenians and make it appear that they had known all along who he was, but had taken him on board in the first instance for a bribe, he forced them to stand out to sea and reach the coast of Asia.

A great deal of his property was secretly removed for him by his friends and sent across the sea to Asia. However, the total sum which the Athenian treasury discovered and confiscated amounted to 100 talents, according to Theopompus, while Theophrastus gives the figure of eighty. At the same time it is worth remarking that before he entered public life, Themistocles did not possess so much as three talents' worth of property.

26. When he landed at Cyme, he learned that all along the coast there were many people lying in wait to capture him, especially Ergoteles and Pythodorus. Indeed, since the Persian king had publicly set the price of 200 talents on his head, he certainly offered a tempting quarry to those who had few scruples as to how they made their money. So he fled to Aegae, a small town in Aeolia. In this place nobody had heard of him, except for his host Nicogenes, the richest man in Aeolia, who was well known to the nobles of the interior, and here he spent a few days in hiding. One night, after the dinner which followed a sacrifice, Olbius, the tutor of Nicogenes' children, suddenly fell into a kind of inspired trance and uttered the following verse:

'Night shall speak and give thee counsel, night shall give thee victory.'

The same night Themistocles, as he lay in bed, dreamed a dream. He

1. i, 137.
2. About 469 B.C.

fancied that he saw a snake winding its way over his belly and creeping up to his neck; as soon as it touched his face it turned into an eagle, enfolded him in its wings, lifted him from the ground, and carried him a great way off. Then there appeared before him a herald's golden staff; the eagle set him down safely upon it, and he suddenly felt himself delivered from his helpless state of anxiety.[1]

At any rate he was sent on his way by Nicogenes, who arranged the following trick. Most barbarous nations, and the Persians in particular, reveal the harsh and cruel side of their nature in the jealousy with which they behave to their women. Not only their wives, but even their slaves and concubines are closely guarded, so that they are never seen by strangers; at home they are shut up indoors, and when they travel they are carried about under awnings which are surrounded with curtains and placed on four-wheeled waggons. This was the kind of vehicle which they got ready for Themistocles and he travelled safely ensconced inside, while his attendants replied to anybody who met or questioned them that they were escorting a poor Greek woman to one of the king's courtiers.

27. According to Thucydides[2] and Charon of Lampsacus, Xerxes was now dead and it was his son Artaxerxes with whom Themistocles had his audience. On the other hand Ephorus, Dinon, Clitarchus, Heracleides, and many other authorities maintain that he came to Xerxes. Thucydides' version seems to me to fit in better with the dates that are known to us over this period, although these are by no means firmly established. At any rate Themistocles now had to face his long-awaited ordeal, and he was received first of all by Artabanus, the vizier. Themistocles announced to him that he was a Greek and wished to have an audience with the king on matters which were of special concern to him and of the highest importance. Artabanus replied: 'Stranger, the customs of men differ very greatly from one another. Every people has its own standards of right and wrong, but all agree that it is right to honour and uphold the customs of their own country. Now you Greeks have the reputation of admiring liberty and equality above all else. We, on the other hand, out of all

1. The eagle was the field-badge of the King of Persia, the herald's wand was the emblem of peace and security, and the metamorphosis of serpent into eagle implied a critical change in Themistocles' fortunes.

2. i, 137.

the excellent laws we possess, take most pride in honouring the king and prostrating ourselves before him as the image of the god who is the preserver of the universe. If you approve our customs, then, and will make obeisance to him, you may see and speak to the king. But if your ideas are different, you must find intermediaries other than myself to communicate with him, since it is contrary to our customs for the king to give audience to a man who has not paid obeisance to him.' Themistocles, when he heard this, said: 'My purpose in coming here, Artabanus, is to increase the king's fame and his power, and I will not only comply with your customs myself, since this is the will of the god who exalts the Persians, but I will multiply the number of those who now do homage to the king. So do not let this matter stand in the way of what I have to tell him.' 'Which of the Greeks,' asked Artabanus, 'am I to say has arrived, for you are evidently a man far out of the ordinary run of intelligence?' 'No one,' Themistocles replied, 'must learn my name before the king himself.'

This is the story we are told by Phanias, but Eratosthenes in his treatise *On Wealth* adds that Themistocles secured his interview and his conversation with the vizier through a woman of Eretria whom the latter had married.

28. However this may be, when Themistocles was led into the king's presence, he kissed the ground in front of him and stood silent. The king then ordered his interpreter to ask him who he was, and to this question he answered: 'May it please Your Majesty, I, who come before you now, am Themistocles the Athenian, an exile pursued by the Greeks. I have done great harm to the Persians, and yet more good than harm, for I prevented the Greeks from pursuing you once they were safe, and the fact that my own country's affairs were out of danger gave me the chance to do you a service. As for myself, the present state of my fortunes makes me resigned to anything. I have come here prepared either to receive your favour, if you are graciously pleased to be reconciled, or to plead with you if you still bear a grudge against me. At any rate you may take my enemies at home as witnesses of the good I have done to Persia, and perhaps you will make my misfortunes the occasion to prove your magnanimity rather than to satisfy your revenge. If you save me, you will be saving a man who has thrown himself on your mercy, but if you destroy me, you will be destroying an enemy of the Greeks.' Themistocles went on to invoke

the supernatural to lend force to his words: he described his dream in the house of Nicogenes, and also the oracle pronounced by Zeus at Dodona, which had commanded him to go to the god's namesake, and how he had concluded from this that Zeus was directing him to the king of Persia, since both were supreme and bore the title of king.

The king listened to him, and although he made no direct answer, he could not help admiring Themistocles' boldness and self-confidence. But later in conversation with his friends, he congratulated himself on what he considered a supreme stroke of good fortune, and he prayed the god Ahriman to make his enemies always of this mind, so that they would continue to drive away their ablest men. After this it is said that he sacrificed to the gods and at once fell to drinking, and that later during the night he called out three times in his sleep for joy: 'I have Themistocles the Athenian!'

29. At daybreak he called his friends together and sent for Themistocles. The latter found little to hope for in the sight which greeted him at the palace gates, for the guards, as soon as they learned his name when he went in, showed themselves hostile and began to abuse him. Besides this Roxanes, the commander of a thousand men, at the moment when Themistocles passed him – the king being seated and the rest of the court waiting in silence – said in angry undertones: 'You subtle serpent of Greece, it is the king's good genius that has brought you here.' In spite of this, when he arrived in the king's presence and had once more made obeisance, the king welcomed him and spoke to him kindly. He declared that he already owed him 200 talents, for since he had delivered himself up, it was only right that he should receive the reward offered to whoever had brought him there. He promised Themistocles much more than this, encouraged him and gave him leave to speak with complete frankness about the affairs of Greece.

Themistocles replied that human speech may be compared to an embroidered tapestry, which shows its various patterns when it is spread out, but conceals and distorts them when it is rolled up, and for this reason he needed time. The king was pleased with this simile and told him to take as much time as he chose. Themistocles asked for a year and in that time he mastered the Persian tongue sufficiently well to converse with the king without an interpreter. Those outside the court supposed that these conversations were concerned with

Greek affairs. But as the king at about that time introduced a great many innovations which affected his favourites and the court in general, Themistocles incurred the dislike of the great nobles for having presumed to use his freedom of speech with the king to their disadvantage. Certainly the honours paid to him were far greater than those enjoyed by other foreigners. He actually took part in the king's hunts and in his indoor pastimes and pursuits, he was privileged to see the queen mother and became her intimate friend, and at the king's command he was instructed in the religious doctrines of the Magians. Then, too, when Demaratus, the exiled king of Sparta who was living in Persia, was ordered to choose a reward for himself, he asked to be allowed to ride in state into Sardis and through it, wearing his tiara upright, as the Persian kings do. At this Mithropaustes, the king's cousin, laid his hand on Demaratus's tiara and remarked: 'This tiara of yours has no brains to cover, and as for yourself, you will not become Zeus simply by taking hold of his thunderbolt!' The king also showed his extreme displeasure towards Demaratus for his request and seemed to have made up his mind never to pardon him, but Themistocles pleaded Demaratus's case and persuaded the king to be reconciled with him.

We are told, besides, that the later kings of Persia, in whose reigns Persian affairs became more closely involved with those of Greece, whenever they sought a Greek adviser, used to promise each of them in writing that he would have a greater position at court than Themistocles. Themistocles, himself, as the story goes, now that he had become a great man and was courted by many people, remarked to his children on one occasion, when a magnificent banquet was set before him: 'My children, we should have been ruined now, if we had not been ruined just when we were!'[1] According to most writers he was given three cities to provide his bread, wine, and meat, namely Magnesia, Lampsacus, and Myus, while Neanthes of Cyzicus and Phanias add two more – Percote and Palaescepsis – which supplied his bedding and his clothes.

30. Once as he was travelling to the coast on his commission to deal with Greek affairs, a Persian named Epixyes, the satrap of Upper Phrygia, plotted to assassinate him. He had a long while before engaged some Pisidians, who were to kill Themistocles when he arrived

1. Thucydides, i, 138.

to stop for the night at a village called the Lion's Head. But the story goes that at noon on that day, while Themistocles slept, Cybele the Great Mother appeared to him in a dream and said: 'Themistocles, avoid the Lion's Head, or else you may fall into a lion's jaws. But in return for this service, you must make your daughter Mnesiptolema my priestess.' Themistocles was greatly disturbed and after offering a prayer to the goddess, he left the highroad, took a roundabout way and passing by the village, encamped when it was dark in the open country.

It so happened that one of the draught animals which carried his tent had fallen into the river, and so Themistocles' servants had spread out the curtains, which were dripping wet, and were drying them out. At this moment the Pisidians came up with drawn swords, and not being able to make out clearly in the moonlight what was being dried, they supposed that it was Themistocles' tent and that they would find him resting inside. But when they approached and were in the act of lifting up the hangings, the guards pounced upon them and seized them. In this way Themistocles escaped the danger and he was so struck by this manifestation of the goddess, that he built a temple in Magnesia in honour of Cybele Dindymene and appointed his daughter, Mnesiptolema, to be her priestess.

31. When he arrived in Sardis and was inspecting at his leisure the architecture of the temples and the great number of votive offerings, he saw in the temple of the Great Mother the so-called Water-carrier. This was a bronze statue of a girl, some three feet high, which he had had made and dedicated at the time when he was commissioner for the water supply at Athens; it was paid for out of the fines imposed on those he had convicted of tapping or diverting the public water. Whether it was because his feelings were touched at seeing this offering in captivity, or because he wanted to demonstrate to the Athenians the measure of honour and influence which he commanded in the king's service, he approached the satrap of Lydia with the request that he should send the statue back to Athens. But the barbarian took offence at this and declared that he would report the matter to the king. Themistocles then became alarmed and turned for help to the satrap's harem; he was able to buy the goodwill of the concubines there and so to pacify the satrap himself. After this he showed a good deal more caution, as he saw that he had even now to fear the jealousy

of the barbarians. For this reason he did not travel about Asia, as Theopompus says, but had a house in Magnesia, enjoyed generous presents from the king, and was accorded equal honours with the great Persian nobles. In this way he was able to live for many years without disturbance, because the king paid no attention to Greek affairs and was far more concerned with the state of the interior.

But the time came[1] when Egypt revolted from the Persian Empire and was abetted by the Athenians, when Greek triremes cruised freely as far as Cyprus and the shores of Cilicia, and when Cimon's control of the sea forced the king to attempt a counter-stroke against the Greeks to check the growth of their power at his expense. Then, at last, troops were moved and generals posted in all directions, and messages came to Themistocles from the court to the effect that the king now commanded him to fulfil his promises and apply himself to Greek affairs in earnest. Themistocles was not swayed by any desire to take revenge on his countrymen, nor was he elated by the great power and position which he would enjoy in the war. It may be that he believed his task was an impossible one, when he measured himself against the other great commanders whom Greece possessed at this time, especially Cimon, who was winning brilliant successes in his campaigns: but what seems most probable is that he refused to tarnish the glory of his earlier achievements, or dishonour the trophies he had won. At any rate he decided that his best course was to end his life in a manner that was worthy of it, and so after offering sacrifice to the gods, he called his friends together, clasped their hands and bade them farewell. Then, according to the generally accepted story, he drank bull's blood, or as others say, a swift poison, and died in the sixty-fifth year of his life,[2] most of which he had spent in politics and in wars, in government and in command. It is said that when the king learned of the manner of his death and the reasons for it, he admired Themistocles more than ever and continued to show kindness both to his friends and his family.

1. Here again Plutarch's chronology becomes difficult to follow, and he adopts his habit of telescoping events to increase effect. The crucial moment for Themistocles may have come about 460–459 B.C., but this cannot be related to Cimon's campaigns (see *Cimon*, note on Ch. 18). In choosing the tradition that Themistocles committed suicide, Plutarch deliberately departs from Thucydides, who states his belief that he died a natural death (i, 138).

2. Thucydides, i, 138.

32. Themistocles left three children by Archippe, the daughter of Lysander from the deme of Alopece; these were Archeptolis, Polyeuctus, and Cleophantus. Of these Plato the philosopher[1] mentions Cleophantus as being a fine horseman, but otherwise insignificant. One of the two eldest sons, Neocles, was bitten by a horse and died while he was still a child, and Diocles was adopted by his maternal grandfather, Lysander. Themistocles also had several daughters, of whom Mnesiptolema, a child of his second wife, married Archeptolis, her half-brother, Italia married Panthoides of Chios, and Sybaris married Nicomedes the Athenian. After Themistocles' death, his nephew, Phrasicles, sailed to Magnesia and with her brothers' consent married Nicomache and also took charge of the youngest of all the children, who was named Asia.

The people of Magnesia have a magnificent tomb of Themistocles in their market-place. As for his remains we need pay no attention to Andocides, when he says in his *Address To His Associates* that the Athenians stole them and scattered them into thin air, since this writer is plainly telling untruths to stir up the hatred of the oligarchs against the people. Phylarchus, too, dramatizes his narrative to such an extent that he all but employs stage machinery, bringing on a certain Neocles and Demophilus as Themistocles' children simply to introduce a touching scene, which anybody can see is pure invention.

But Diodorus the Topographer, in his treatise *On Tombs*, mentions, as a surmise rather than as an established fact, that near the great harbour of Piraeus a kind of elbow juts out from the headland opposite Alcimus: as you round this, he says, where the sea begins to grow calm, there is a large plinth, and the monument resting on this and shaped like an altar, he believes, is the tomb of Themistocles. And he claims the support of Plato, the comic poet, who writes:

> There on a noble height they heaped your tomb
> Above the shore, and there the merchantmen
> Shall hail it as they pass; there you look down
> Upon the outward and the inward bound,
> And the galleys crowding sail as they race for home.

There were certain honours, too, which the Magnesians kept up for the descendants of Themistocles even down to my own times, and these were enjoyed by Themistocles the Athenian, who was a friend and fellow-student of mine in the school of Ammonius the philosopher.

1. *Meno*, 93.

4

ARISTIDES

[*c.* 520 – *c.* 468 B.C.]

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ARISTIDES, the son of Lysimachus, belonged to the tribe of Antiochis and the deme of Alopece. The extent of his wealth has been much disputed: according to some accounts he spent his whole life in extreme poverty, and at his death left his daughters so ill provided that for a long time they remained unmarried. But while many writers have repeated this version, Demetrius of Phalerum in his book on Socrates says that he knows of an estate in Phalerum which belonged to Aristides and where he is buried, and maintains that there is further evidence that he was a wealthy man. In the first place there is the fact that he held the office of Archon Eponymus, which was only open to a man who had drawn it by lot and who belonged to the class of families carrying the highest property assessment (known as the Pentacosiomedimni, or receivers of 500 bushels a year). Secondly, there is the matter of his ostracism; for this, Demetrius argues, was not inflicted on the poorer citizens, but only on the members of the great houses whose family pretensions excited envy. Lastly, there is the fact that he left behind in the precinct of Dionysus several tripods as offerings to commemorate his victory as choregus.[1] These are to be seen to this day, still bearing the inscription: 'The tribe Antiochis won the victory; Aristides was the choregus; Archestratus was the poet.'

Now this last argument, although it looks an impressive one, is really very weak. Both Epaminondas, who as everybody knows, was brought up and lived all his life in great poverty, and Plato the philosopher were responsible for public entertainments on a very ambitious scale – performances which were given in the first case by male flute-

1. A choregus, who supported the expense of assembling and training a chorus for the annual festival at Athens, was necessarily a rich man.

players and in the second by a chorus of boys trained to sing and dance – but the money was provided for Plato by Dion of Syracuse and for Epaminondas by Pelopidas. Good men are by no means implacably hostile to the gifts offered by their friends; they regard it as mean and sordid to hoard away presents with the object of increasing their own wealth, but they do not refuse the kind of gift which enables them to make a handsome public gesture without enriching themselves.

In the case of the tripods, however, Panaetius argues that Demetrius was misled by a confusion of names. From the time of the Persian wars, he says, down to the end of the Peloponnesian war there are only two records of an Aristides as the victorious choregus, and neither of these is the son of Lysimachus. One of them was the son of Xenophilus and the other lived much later. The evidence for this is in the first place the inscription itself, which displays the Ionian lettering used after the archonship of Eucleides,[1] and secondly the coupling with Aristides of the name of Archestratus. The latter is nowhere mentioned during the Persian wars, but his name often appears during the Peloponnesian war as belonging to a choric poet.

Panaetius's argument deserves to be examined more closely. But as for the penalty of ostracism, this could be inflicted upon anyone who was regarded as standing above the common level in prestige, in birth, or in eloquence. It was for this reason, for example, that Damon, Pericles' teacher, was ostracized, because he was considered to be a man of extraordinary intellectual power. Again, according to Idomeneus, Aristides was not appointed archon by lot,[2] but was elected by the Athenians. Certainly, if he became archon after the battle of Plataea, as Demetrius himself has recorded, it is not at all surprising, in view of the reputation and the success he gained on that occasion, that his courage should have earned him an office which other men obtained through their wealth by drawing lots for it. Demetrius, in fact, is obviously concerned to exempt both Aristides and Socrates from what he regards as the great evil of poverty, for he tells us that Socrates possessed not only a house of his own but a sum of seventy minae, which was lent at interest to Crito.

1. 403–402 B.C.

2. From 508 to 487 B.C. the archons were elected by vote. After 487 they were appointed by lot out of 500 candidates chosen by the demes. The change suggests that the office had decreased in importance in the meantime.

2. Aristides was a close friend of Cleisthenes, who established the Athenian constitution after the expulsion of the tyrants,[1] but the man whom he admired and took as his model above all other statesmen was Lycurgus the Spartan. In consequence Aristides supported an aristocratic form of government and so constantly found himself in opposition to Themistocles, the son of Neocles, who was the champion of the people. Some writers say that these two, even when they were children and pupils together, invariably opposed each other in their words and actions, not only in serious matters but even in play, and that this rivalry quickly revealed their respective natures, Themistocles' being resourceful, daring, unscrupulous, and ready to dash impetuously into any undertaking, while Aristides' was founded upon a steadfast character, which was intent on justice and incapable of any falsehood, vulgarity, or trickery even in jest.

Ariston of Ceos, however, maintains that this enmity between the two, which rose to such a pitch of intensity, had its origins in a love affair, for both men were passionately devoted to Stesilaus of Ceos, the most strikingly handsome youth of his time. These feelings were carried to such lengths that they did not lay aside their rivalry even after the boy's beauty had long passed away. It was as if this had been merely a preliminary bout, after which they both plunged into politics with passionate energy and in pursuit of diametrically opposite objectives.

Themistocles joined a political group and in this way secured considerable influence and protection for himself, so much so that when someone remarked to him that he would be a good man to govern the Athenians, always provided that he would be just and impartial to everybody, he answered: 'I hope I shall never sit on a tribunal where I shall not be able to give my friends some advantage over strangers.'

Aristides, by contrast, avoided any attachments in political life and chose to follow his own path. This was, in the first place, because he did not want to be drawn by political associates into committing injustices, nor again to vex them by denying their requests, and, secondly, because he saw that many men were encouraged to do wrong by the power they derived from their friends, and he was anxious to guard against this, believing as he did that the only true security for the good citizen lay in his own words and actions.

1. 510–509 B.C.

3. On the other hand, because Themistocles was constantly proposing reckless reforms and at the same time checking and obstructing him at every step in the business of government, Aristides was forced to oppose Themistocles' measures in the same fashion, partly in self-defence and partly to limit his opponent's power, which was constantly growing with the support of the people. He thought it better that the people should forgo an occasional advantage than that Themistocles should get his way on every occasion and carry all before him. But finally he opposed and defeated Themistocles at a moment when the latter was trying to carry a really necessary measure, and then Aristides could not refrain from saying, as he left the Assembly, that there would be no safety for Athens unless the people threw both Themistocles and himself into the barathrum.[1]

On another occasion he had himself brought a certain bill before the people, which he was carrying through successfully, although in the teeth of vigorous opposition. But just as the president of the Assembly was about to put it to the vote, Aristides understood from the speeches of his opponents that it would prove a bad measure and withdrew it without taking a division. Often, too, he would introduce his proposals under the names of other men, so that Themistocles should not oppose measures which could benefit the whole community simply out of personal antagonism towards himself.

What was particularly admirable about him was his strength of purpose amid the ebb and flow of political fortunes. He was never unduly elated by any honours that were paid him, while he bore his reverses with serene composure and he believed it his duty to give his services to his country at all times freely and without reward, not merely in terms of money, but also of reputation. This was how it came about, so the story goes, that when Aeschylus's verses which refer to Amphiaraus in *The Seven Against Thebes* were being recited in the theatre,

> His aim is not to seem just, but to be so.
> His mind is a deep-ploughed field, from which he reaps
> A harvest of wise counsel . . .[2]

the whole audience turned round to look at Aristides, because they felt that he, more than any man, was the personification of these virtues.

1. The pit into which the bodies of criminals were thrown after execution.
2. *Seven Against Thebes*, 592 ff.

4. He was a sturdy champion of justice, who was as little swayed by personal sympathy or the desire to do a favour as he was by feelings of anger or hatred. At any rate there is a story of how, when he was prosecuting a personal enemy in court, the jury were disinclined to hear the defence at all and demanded that the vote should be taken at once. Thereupon Aristides jumped to his feet and supported the defendant's plea that he should be allowed his legal rights and have his case heard. On another occasion, when he was acting as private arbitrator between two parties, one of them made the point that his opponent had done Aristides serious harm. 'Do not tell me about that,' Aristides answered, 'tell me what harm he has done you. I am here to judge your case, not mine.'

When he was elected to supervise the public revenue, he uncovered the fact that not only his colleagues, but also his predecessors had embezzled large sums of money, and none more than Themistocles,

A clever man, but apt to be light-fingered.

For this reason Themistocles was able to unite a large number of people against Aristides: he then proceeded to prosecute him for malversation in the presenting of his accounts, and, according to Idomeneus, actually got him convicted. However, the leading and most upright citizens in Athens were roused to indignation at this, and in the event he was not only exempted from the fine, but was appointed to hold the very same office again. After this Aristides pretended to regret his earlier actions and to show a more indulgent attitude. He made himself extremely popular with the men who were stealing the public funds by not investigating their dealings or scrutinizing them minutely, so that they proceeded to fill their pockets, praise Aristides to the skies and even, in their anxiety to get him re-elected, canvass the people on his behalf. But just as the voting was about to begin, Aristides rose and gave the Athenians a piece of his mind. 'When I carried out my duties well and faithfully,' he told them, 'I was disgraced. But now that I am throwing away most of your money to thieves, everybody thinks I am an admirable citizen. So far as I am concerned, I am more ashamed of the honour you are paying me now than I was of my conviction, and I am sorry for you, because you evidently find it more praiseworthy to pander to a set of rogues than to stand guard over the wealth of the state.' By these words and by exposing their thefts, he certainly silenced the men who

were clamouring in his support, but he also won genuine and well-merited praise from the most honest citizens.

5. When Datis was sent out by king Darius, on the pretext of punishing the Athenians for the burning of Sardis, but really to subdue the whole of Greece, he landed all his forces at Marathon and proceeded to ravage the countryside. Of the ten generals[1] whom the Athenians had appointed to conduct the war, Miltiades enjoyed the highest prestige, while Aristides was rated second in reputation and ability, and the fact that he supported on that occasion Miltiades' proposal to attack had an important effect on the issue. Each general held the supreme command for one day, and when Aristides' turn arrived, he handed over his authority to Miltiades, thereby demonstrating to his colleagues that it is both prudent and dignified and certainly no disgrace to obey those who are best qualified to command. By calming down his fellow-generals' rivalry in this way and persuading them to accept a single plan, which was also the best, he provided Miltiades with the strength which comes from undivided authority, for each of the generals at once agreed to give up his day of command and came to Miltiades for his orders.

During the battle it was the Athenian centre which bore the main weight of the attack, and it was there that the Persians held out longest, ranged against the tribes of Leontis and Antiochis. Themistocles and Aristides both fought with great distinction side by side in the front line, for the one belonged to Leontis and the other to Antiochis. When the Athenians had routed the enemy and forced them back on board their ships, they saw that the barbarians were not making for the islands, but were being carried by wind and current towards Attica. They were alarmed that the Persians might find the capital undefended, and so hurried back with nine of the tribes and arrived

1. Each of the ten tribes elected a general to command its fighting-men, and there was also an elected commander-in-chief, the polemarch, on this occasion Callimachus, whom Plutarch does not mention. Miltiades was only one of the ten, though evidently a dominating personality. Plutarch is probably anticipating here the arrangement which later prevailed, when the polemarch had been replaced by a board of ten generals, each of whom, as a peace-time administrative arrangement, presided for a day in rotation. But on active service, the command could be assigned to a single general, appointed by the Assembly, as when Themistocles was appointed supreme commander in 480 B.C.

in Athens on the same day. Aristides, however, was left at Marathon with his own tribe to guard the prisoners and the spoils of the battle. He lived up to his reputation, for although there was gold and silver lying about in heaps, clothes of every kind and untold wealth which had been left in the tents and the captured ships, he had no desire to touch these things himself, nor would he allow others to do so, although there were some who helped themselves without his knowledge. Among these was Callias the Torchbearer.[1]

One of the barbarians, it appears, believed that Callias was a king on account of his long hair and the fillet he wore, and so he fell on his knees, made obeisance before him and taking his hand as a suppliant, showed him a pile of gold, which lay buried in a kind of pit. Callias then went on to behave in the most inhuman and lawless fashion. He took the gold, but immediately killed the man to prevent his betraying the secret to anyone else. Because of this the comic poets, it is said, called his descendants *Laccopluti* or men who became wealthy from a well, a gibe at the place where Callias found his gold.

Aristides was at once appointed Archon Eponymus (that is the archon who gives his name to the year), and yet Demetrius of Phalerum says that it was only a little while before his death and after the battle of Plataea that he held this office.[2] But in the public records after the name of Xanthippides, in whose archonship Mardonius was defeated at Plataea, you can nowhere find the name of Aristides in the whole list of those who held the office, whereas immediately after Phaenippus, whose year coincided with the victory of Marathon, there is an Aristides mentioned as archon.

6. Of all Aristides' virtues it was his justice which most impressed itself on the masses, since it was this which he practised most consistently and which affected most people. For this reason, although he was poor and had no standing but that of a popular leader, he won that most royal and godlike title of The Just. That is an epithet which was never sought after by kings or tyrants: some of them delighted in being styled The Besieger of Cities, The Thunderbolt, or The Conqueror, and others The Eagle or The Hawk, but all of them, apparently, preferred a renown which was founded on power or violence

1. This was the title of one of the senior officials at the celebration of the Eleusinian Mysteries.

2. 479–478 B.C.

rather than on virtue. And yet the divine nature, with which these men strive to be associated and to resemble, is believed to be distinguished by three superior attributes, immortality, power, and virtue, and of these the noblest and the most truly divine is virtue. The void and the elements are, in a sense, immortal, and earthquakes, thunderbolts, floods, and hurricanes can overwhelm by their power, but justice belongs only to those beings who are capable of reason and the knowledge of the divine.

So when we consider the three sentiments, admiration, fear, and reverence, which divinity inspires among mankind, we find that men appear to admire the gods and think them blessed because they are immortal and unchangeable; to stand in fear and awe of them because of their power and authority; and to love, honour, and reverence them because of their justice. At the same time men long for immortality, to which no flesh can attain, and for power, which remains for the most part in the hands of fortune, while they give virtue, the only divine excellence of which we are capable, the last place in their scheme of values. But here they show themselves fools, since a life that is spent in the midst of power and great fortune and authority still needs justice to make it divine, for injustice renders it merely brutish.

7. But to return to Aristides. It was his fate first of all to be loved because of this surname, but afterwards to be envied and hated, especially when Themistocles put about the story that by the fact of his acting as arbitrator and judging all cases referred to him in private, Aristides had abolished the public courts, and that without anybody noticing it, he had made himself virtually the ruler of Athens, and only lacked an armed bodyguard. By this time, too, the people had become so exultant because of their victory over the Persians that they thought themselves capable of anything and were offended at anybody whose name and reputation rose above the common level. So they flocked into the city from all over Attica and proceeded to ostracize Aristides,[1] disguising their jealousy of his fame under the pretext that they were afraid of a tyranny.

This sentence of ostracism was not in itself a punishment for wrongdoing. It was described for the sake of appearances as a measure to curtail and humble a man's power and prestige in cases where

1. 483–482 B.C.

these had grown oppressive; but in reality it was a humane device for appeasing the people's jealousy, which could thus vent its desire to do harm, not by inflicting some irreparable injury, but by a sentence of ten years' banishment. Later on the penalty came to be inflicted on various ignoble creatures, the scum of the political world, and it was then abandoned, the last man to be ostracized being Hyperbolus.[1] Hyperbolus's banishment is said to have been brought about in this way. Alcibiades and Nicias, the two most powerful men in the state, were the leaders of the two opposing parties. So when the people were on the point of carrying out an ostracism and were obviously going to vote against one or the other, the two men came to terms, combined their rival factions and so arranged matters that Hyperbolus was ostracized. The people were enraged at this and felt that the institution of ostracism had been abused and degraded, and so they not only ceased to resort to it but formally abolished the practice.

The procedure, to give a general account of it, was as follows. Each voter took an *ostrakon*, or piece of earthenware, wrote on it the name of the citizen he wished to be banished and carried it to a part of the market-place which was fenced off with a circular paling. Then the archons first counted the total number of votes cast, for if there were less than six thousand, the ostracism was void. After this they sorted the votes and the man who had the most recorded against his name was proclaimed to be exiled for ten years, with the right, however, to receive the income from his estate.

The story goes that on this occasion, while the votes were being written down, an illiterate and uncouth rustic handed his piece of earthenware to Aristides and asked him to write the name Aristides on it. The latter was astonished and asked the man what harm Aristides had ever done him. 'None whatever,' was the reply, 'I do not even know the fellow, but I am sick of hearing him called The Just everywhere!' When he heard this, Aristides said nothing, but wrote his name on the *ostrakon* and handed it back. At the last, as he was leaving the city, he lifted his hands to heaven and uttered a prayer, which, it appears, took the opposite form to the prayer of Achilles:[2] in it he begged that no crisis might befall the Athenians which would force them to remember Aristides.

1. About 417 B.C. See *Nicias*, Ch. 11, *Alcibiades*, Ch. 13.
2. *Iliad*, i, 407–12.

8. However, less than three years later[1] Xerxes was marching through Thessaly and Boeotia on his way to Attica and the Athenians revoked the decree of ostracism and passed another to recall the exiles: they were particularly alarmed that Aristides might go over to the enemy and seduce many of his fellow-citizens into joining the barbarians. But here, too, they greatly misjudged their man, for even before this latest decree he had constantly encouraged and incited the Greeks to defend their freedom. Then, after it had been passed, and at the time when Themistocles was serving as general with supreme powers, Aristides gave him all the aid he could both in advice and in action, and for the sake of Athens he helped his bitterest enemy to become the most famous of men.

Thus, for example, at the moment when Eurybiades was preparing to abandon Salamis, the Persian ships put to sea at night and surrounded him, blockading both the straits where he lay and the approaches to the islands. None of the Greeks knew that they had been encircled, but Aristides boldly sailed over from Aegina, running the gauntlet of the enemy's fleet and came after nightfall to Themistocles' tent. He called him outside and when the two men were alone together, he said: 'We two, Themistocles, if we have any sense, will have to stop this vain and childish feud of ours. From now on we ought to begin a more honourable kind of contest to save our country, with yourself in command and with me to advise and help you. I see already that you are the only man who has grasped what is the best course for us, when you insist that we should stay here and fight out the issue in the straits as soon as possible. It is true that your allies are hindering you, but at any rate the enemy seems to be playing into your hands. The sea is full of their ships all around us and behind us, too, so that even those who least like the idea will have to take their courage in both hands and fight. There is no way out now.' Themistocles answered: 'I would not have chosen to be outdone by you, Aristides. But I admire the example you have set me and I shall try to follow it and to do better still in future.' At the same time he told Aristides of the trap he had laid for the barbarians and begged him to argue with Eurybiades and try to convince him – since Aristides' opinion carried more weight with the commander-in-chief – that the only hope of safety lay in fighting a battle at sea. When the council of generals met, Cleocritus the Corinthian told Themistocles that even

1. 480 B.C.

Aristides was opposed to his plan, since although he was present he had refrained from speaking. Aristides at once replied that he would certainly have spoken if he had not believed that Themistocles had already given the soundest advice: as it was he had said nothing, not for any goodwill he bore Themistocles, but because he was convinced that his scheme was the best.

9. While the Greek commanders were putting this plan into effect, Aristides noticed that Psyttaleia, a small island lying in the strait in front of Salamis, was swarming with the enemy's troops. So he embarked a force of the most enterprising and best trained of the Athenians in small boats, landed on Psyttaleia, attacked the barbarians, and killed every one of them, except for a few of the Persian nobles, who were captured alive. Among these were three sons of the king's sister, Sandauce, whom he immediately sent to Themistocles, and it is said that at the command of Euphrantides the prophet they were sacrificed to Dionysus the Eater of Flesh in obedience to some oracle. Aristides then lined the beaches of the island all round with his infantry, to watch for anybody who might be washed up, so that none of the Greeks should lose their lives and none of the Persians escape. In fact, the main clash between the two fleets and the heaviest fighting of the whole battle seems to have taken place near this spot, and for this reason a trophy was afterwards set up on Psyttaleia.

After the battle was won, Themistocles thought he would test Aristides' opinion, and remarked that the action they had just carried through was splendid in itself, but that there was an even greater objective before them, and that was to capture Asia in Europe by sailing as quickly as possible to the Hellespont and breaking down the bridge of boats there. This drew a sharp exclamation from Aristides and he urged Themistocles to drop the plan at once and apply his wits instead to finding the quickest means of getting the Persians out of Greece. He was afraid that an army of such an immense size, if it were shut up and could see no way of escape, might turn and fight from sheer necessity. So Themistocles once again secretly sent the eunuch Arnaces, who was one of the prisoners of war, to tell the king that the Greeks had already sailed to attack the bridges, but that Themistocles had succeeded in turning them back, as he wished to save the king's life.

10. Xerxes was terrified by this report and at once set out with all speed for the Hellespont, while Mardonius was left behind with

300,000 men,[1] the most seasoned troops in the army. He was a formidable opponent who had plenty of confidence in his land forces, and he wrote in threatening terms to the Greeks as follows: 'With that fleet of yours you have managed to defeat men who are used to dry land and know nothing about handling an oar. But now the land of Thessaly is wide, and the plains of Boeotia are fair ground for good cavalry and infantry to fight on.'

At the same time he sent the Athenians private letters and proposals from the king, who offered to rebuild their city, give them large sums of money, and establish them as the masters of Greece, if only they would withdraw from the war.

The news of this caused great alarm among the Spartans; they dispatched an embassy to Athens and begged the Athenians to send their wives and children to Sparta and to accept provisions from them for the old and the sick, for the people were suffering great privations as a result of their city and their territory having both been overrun at once. In spite of this, after receiving the ambassadors they returned an answer drawn up by Aristides, which cannot but command our admiration. They declared that they could excuse their enemies for supposing that everything could be bought with money, because such people had no conception of anything of higher value, but that they were offended with the Spartans for having eyes only for the poverty and scarcity that prevailed in Athens and for so far forgetting the bravery and the spirit of the Athenians as to appeal to them to fight for Greece by offering rations. After proposing this motion, Aristides called the ambassadors into the Assembly and told the Spartans to report to their people that there was not enough gold in the world, above the ground or under it, to tempt the Athenians to barter away the freedom of Greece. As for Mardonius's messengers, Aristides pointed to the sun and declared: 'As long as the sun there keeps its course about the world, so long will the Athenians make war on the Persians, because of the lands they have ravaged and the temples they have defiled and burned down.' Besides this he moved that the priests should lay a curse on any man who entered into negotiations with the Medes or abandoned the Greek alliance.

1. Plutarch is here following Herodotus's figures, as he often does. Modern estimates put Mardonius's strength at perhaps an army corps of 60,000 men commanded by himself, a further 40,000 under Artabazus and 20,000 renegade Greeks.

When Mardonius invaded Attica for the second time,[1] the people once more crossed over to Salamis. Then Aristides, who had been sent to Sparta, reproached the Spartans for their slowness and their indifference and for having abandoned Athens to the barbarians yet again, and demanded that they should come to the rescue of what still remained of Greece. When the ephors heard this the festival of the Hyacinthia was still in progress, and they continued to while away the time with public celebrations and entertainments so long as it was daylight. But once it was dark they chose 5,000 Spartans, each attended by seven Helots, and sent them off without telling the Athenians. So when Aristides again appeared before them to complain, they laughed and replied that he was talking nonsense or else must be only half awake, because the army had already arrived at the tomb of Orestes in Arcadia on its march against 'the foreigners', for this was the name they gave the Persians. Aristides retorted that it was a particularly ill-timed joke to deceive their allies instead of their enemies. This is the account given by Idomeneus. But in the decree which Aristides had passed, it is not he who is named as an ambassador to Sparta, but Cimon, Xanthippus, and Myronides.

11. Aristides was appointed the Athenian general with full powers for the battle[2] that was now expected, and he came to Plataea in command of 8,000 Athenian hoplites. Pausanias, the commander-in-chief of the whole Greek army, joined him there with his force of Spartans and the remainder of the Greek contingents came thronging in one after the other. The whole barbarian camp was extended along the bank of the river Asopus. It had no fixed boundaries, because of the immense size of the army, but the baggage trains and the main headquarters were enclosed within a walled square, each side of which was a mile and a quarter long.

Tisamenes of Elis now uttered a prophecy to Pausanias and all the Greeks. He foretold that they would win a victory provided that they did not advance to the attack, but stayed on the defensive. Aristides, however, sent to Delphi, and his messengers received an answer from the god that the Athenians would overcome their adversaries on

1. June 479 B.C.

2. Plutarch, like Herodotus, gives an account of the battle of Plataea which makes the most of the Athenian contribution and says very little of the part played by the other Greek states.

condition that they prayed to Zeus, Hera of Cithaeron, Pan and the Sphragitic nymphs; that they sacrificed to the heroes Androcrates, Leucon, Pisandrus, Damocrates, Hypsion, Actaeon, and Polyidus; and that they risked a battle on their own territory in the plain of the Eleusinian goddesses Demeter and Kore. This oracle was reported to Aristides, who found it bewildering in the extreme. Certainly, the heroes to whom he was ordered to sacrifice were founders of Plataea, and the cave of the nymphs of Sphragis was situated on one of the peaks of Cithaeron, facing the point on the horizon where the sun sets in summer. In the past this cave was said to have contained an oracle, and many of the inhabitants nearby became possessed of oracular powers and were known as *nympholepti*, or nymph-possessed. But the mention of the plain of Demeter of Eleusis, and the promise of victory to the Athenians if they fought a battle on their own soil appeared to summon them back to Attica and transfer the seat of the war there.

At this point the Plataean commander, Arimnestus, had a dream, in which he was questioned by Zeus the Deliverer as to what the Greeks had decided to do, and he replied: 'Tomorrow, Lord, we shall lead our army back to Eleusis and fight it out with the Persians there, as the Delphic oracle has commanded us.' At this the god declared that they had missed the whole meaning of the oracle, for the places which it mentioned were all in the neighbourhood of Plataea, and they would find them if only they searched. All this was revealed so clearly to Arimnestus that as soon as he awoke, he sent for the oldest and most experienced of his fellow-countrymen. When he had discussed his dream and questioned them, he discovered that under Mount Cithaeron near Hysiae there was a very ancient temple dedicated to the Eleusinian goddesses, Demeter and Kore. He at once took Aristides with him and led him to the place, which offered an excellent position in which to station a body of heavy infantry against a force that was superior in cavalry, since the spurs of Cithaeron, where they adjoin the temple and run down into the plain, make the ground impassable for cavalry. Close by, too, stood the shrine of the hero Androcrates in the midst of a thick and shady grove. Finally, to make sure that the conditions for victory which the oracle had mentioned should be fulfilled in every detail, Arimnestus put forward a motion, which the Plataeans then passed, that they should remove their boundary stones on the side facing Attica, and give this territory to the

Athenians, to enable them to fight in defence of Greece on their own soil, as the oracle had laid down.

This noble gesture on the Plataeans' part became so famous that, many years later, when Alexander had become the ruler of Asia,[1] he rebuilt the walls of Plataea and had it proclaimed by herald at the Olympic games that the king conferred this honour upon the Plataeans for their bravery and generosity in freely giving up their territory to the Greeks in the Persian wars, and thus showing themselves the most ardent of all peoples in the common cause.

12. The Tegean contingent quarrelled with the Athenians about their position in the line of battle. They claimed that, according to precedent, as the Spartans had occupied the right wing, it was their privilege to be posted on the left and they invoked the great exploits of their ancestors to support their argument. These pretensions annoyed the Athenians, but Aristides came forward and spoke out as follows: 'This is not the moment to argue with the Tegeans about matters of ancestry and personal courage. All that we wish to say to you Spartans and to the rest of the Greeks is that a man's place in the battle line neither gives him courage nor takes it away. Whatever position you give us, we shall try to hold it with honour and bring no disgrace upon the record we have earned on the battlefield up to this day. We did not come here to quarrel with our allies, but to fight our enemies, not to boast about our ancestors, but to show our courage in defence of Greece. This battle will prove clearly enough how much any city or general or private soldier is worth to Greece.' When they heard this speech, the generals and other members of the council of war decided in the Athenians' favour and posted them on the left wing.

13. While the cause of Greece still hung in the balance and Athens above all was in mortal danger, some of the richest Athenians, who were members of the leading families but had been impoverished by the war, saw that they had lost not only their wealth but all their influence and prestige in the city, and that the positions of power and honour were now held by others. They therefore met in secret in a certain house in Plataea and plotted to overthrow the democracy, or if they could not achieve this, to harm the Greek cause in every possible way and betray it to the barbarians.

1. 331–330 B.C.

By the time that Aristides learned of it, the conspiracy had begun to spread through the camp and many men had already been won over. He feared that matters had now reached a critical point and decided that he could neither ignore the plot nor yet expose it completely, since there was no knowing how many people might be implicated if the inquiry were to proceed strictly along the lines that justice demanded and regardless of expediency. He therefore arrested eight or so of the many conspirators. Two of these, who were the first to be formally accused and who were also the most deeply implicated, Aeschines of Lamptrae and Agesias of Acharnae, succeeded in escaping from the camp. The remainder he released, so as to give those who still believed they were unsuspected a chance to take courage and repent. He also hinted that the war offered them, as it were, a great tribunal, in which they could clear themselves of the charges against them by showing that their intentions towards their country were honest and just.

14. After this Mardonius tested the strength of the Greeks with the arm he believed to be his strongest, by sending his entire force of cavalry to attack them in their camp, where all of them, except for the Megarians, were occupying strong positions on rocky ground at the foot of Cithaeron. The Megarians, who numbered 3,000, were stationed the nearest to the open plain, and for this reason they suffered severely from the cavalry attacks, which broke upon them in wave after wave from all sides. They therefore sent a messenger urgently to Pausanias demanding immediate help, as they could not hold out unsupported against the immense numbers of the barbarians. Pausanias, when this news reached him, saw at once that the Megarian camp was almost blotted out of sight under the hail of the enemy's javelins and arrows and that its defenders were huddled together in a confined space. He himself was powerless to help them against cavalry, since his Spartan contingent was heavily armoured and slow in movement, but he put the Megarians' plight before the other Greek generals and commanders who were with him, as a challenge to their ambition and warlike spirit, and appealed for volunteers to fight off the enemy and rescue the Megarians. The rest all hesitated, but Aristides undertook on the Athenians' behalf to carry out the task and dispatched Olympiodorus, the bravest of his officers, with the 300 picked men he commanded and some archers in support.

The Athenians formed up quickly and went into the attack at a run.

The commander of the barbarians' cavalry was Masistius, a man possessed of legendary courage and an exceptionally powerful and handsome physique, who, as soon as he saw the Athenians coming, wheeled his horse and rode to attack them. There followed a tremendous struggle as the two forces met at the charge, since both treated this clash as the crucial encounter of the whole battle. At length Masistius's horse was wounded by an arrow and threw its rider, who lay where he fell. He could not get to his feet because of the weight of his armour, but neither could the Athenians dispatch him – since not only his chest but also his head and limbs were encased in gold and bronze and iron – even though they threw themselves upon him and hacked at his body. But at last he was killed when a soldier drove the point of his javelin through the eye-hole of his helmet, and the rest of the Persians abandoned his body and fled. The Greeks discovered the real importance of their success not from the number of the dead, which was small, but from the grief the barbarians displayed. They shaved off their own hair in mourning for Masistius and cut off the manes of their horses and mules, and their cries and lamentations filled the whole plain, for they felt they had lost a man who for his valour and authority was second only to Mardonius.

15. After this cavalry action there was no more fighting for a long time, for the priests had prophesied from their sacrifices to each side alike that they would win a victory if they remained on the defensive, but would be defeated if they attacked. At last Mardonius found that he had provisions only for a few days more, while the strength of the Greek army continued to grow as fresh reinforcements arrived, and his patience became exhausted; he decided then that he would wait no longer, but would cross the Asopus at first light and make a surprise attack on the Greeks, and that evening he gave the order to his commanders.

But towards midnight a solitary horseman quietly rode up to the Greek camp. He reached the outposts and requested them to call Aristides, who was quickly fetched, whereupon the visitor told him: 'I am Alexander the Macedonian, and I have come out of goodwill to you at the risk of my life to prevent you from becoming demoralized or fighting at a disadvantage through being taken by surprise. Mardonius intends to attack tomorrow, but the reason is not that he is full of hope or confident of success, but that he is running short of supplies.

In fact his soothsayers are trying to prevent him from fighting by means of unfavourable sacrifices and prophecies, and the army is disheartened and unsure of itself. He is forced to act boldly and put his fortune to the test, or else, if he does nothing, to see his men reduced to starvation.' Alexander then begged Aristides to keep what he had heard to himself, to remember his words, but not to confide them to a soul. Aristides, however, told him that it would not be right to conceal this intelligence from Pausanias, since the supreme authority rested with him, but that it could be kept secret from the other generals; on the other hand, if the Greeks were victorious, everybody should be told of Alexander's courage and enterprise. After this exchange the king of the Macedonians rode back again, and Aristides went to Pausanias's tent and told him all that had passed between them. They then sent for the other generals and gave them orders to keep the troops standing to, as a battle was expected.

16. At this point, so Herodotus tells us,[1] Pausanias sent word to Aristides to transfer the Athenians to the right wing, so as to face the Persians; they would fight better there, he argued, since they already had experience of Persian tactics and enjoyed the confidence of having already defeated them once, while the left wing, where the renegade Greek allies were to attack, should be entrusted to him.

The rest of the Athenian commanders thought this a particularly galling and ill-judged order on Pausanias's part, to leave the rest of the line as it was, while he moved the Athenians – and nobody else – back and forth as if they were so many Helots, and finally to station them opposite the enemy's best troops. But Aristides told them they were quite wrong. They had just been quarrelling with the Tegeans for the honour of occupying the left wing and had been full of pride when they were given precedence; now when the Spartans of their own free will were making way for them on the right wing, and in a sense offering them the place of honour, they did not welcome the distinction that was being held out to them, nor see what an advantage it was to fight against the barbarians, who were their natural enemies, rather than against men of their own race and blood. When they heard this, the Athenians gladly changed places with the Spartans, and the word spread through their ranks that the enemy they were to meet would have no better arms nor stouter hearts than those who

1. ix. 46.

had fought at Marathon. They had the same bows and arrows, the same embroidered clothing and gold ornaments to cover soft bodies and faint hearts, while the Athenians were armed not only with the same weapons and limbs as on that day, but with the bolder spirit which is born of victory. They had this advantage, too, that they were fighting not only for their country and their city as their comrades had done before them, but also for the trophies they had set up at Marathon and Salamis, and they intended the world to know that even these triumphs were not due to Miltiades alone or to good fortune, but to the people of Athens.

The Spartans and Athenians then hurried to exchange their positions, but the Thebans learned of this move through deserters and told Mardonius. So, either because he was afraid of the Athenians or else was ambitious to engage the Spartans at once, he switched his Persian troops to the right wing and ordered the Greek contingents in his army to form up opposite the Athenians. When this change in the enemy's order of battle became apparent, Pausanias moved back and occupied the right wing, whereupon Mardonius re-formed his left wing to face the Spartans, as it had done originally. In this way the day ended without any further action. The Greeks now decided after a council of war to shift their camp farther away and occupy a position that was better supplied with water, as the springs in their neighbourhood had been fouled and rendered unusable by the barbarians' superior cavalry.

17. When it grew dark, the generals started out to lead their troops to the place selected for the new camp. The soldiers, however, were not at all willing to follow them in close order, but as soon as they had left their first line of entrenchments, most of them made for the town of Plataea, and there was great confusion as they proceeded to scatter and pitch their tents at random. It so happened that the Spartans, much against their will, were left behind by themselves. One of their officers was Amompharetus, a man of fierce courage and a fire-eater who had long been spoiling for action, and was thoroughly out of patience with the innumerable postponements and delays. He now denounced this change of position as nothing more than a cowardly scuttle and declared that he would not budge from his post, but would stay there with his company and wait for Mardonius's attack. When Pausanias came up and told him that this move had been formally

voted and decreed by the war council of the Greeks, Amompharetus picked up a great stone and flung it down at Pausanias's feet. 'That is my vote for battle,' he said, 'and you can leave me out of your miserable discussions and motions!' Pausanias did not know what to do, so finally he sent word to the Athenians, who were just then moving off, and begged them to wait and march at the same time as himself, and he then started to lead the rest of his force towards Plataea, hoping that in this way he would force Amompharetus to move.

Meanwhile it had begun to grow light, and Mardonius, who had discovered that the Greeks had evacuated their camp, now advanced in battle order and bore down on the Spartans with a tremendous shouting and clashing of arms on the barbarians' part, as if it were not a matter of fighting a battle, but merely of sweeping away the Greeks as they fled, and this, in fact, was very nearly what happened. Pausanias, when he recognized the Persians' intention, halted his march and ordered his men into battle formation, but either because he was angry with Amompharetus, or else through sheer confusion at the speed of the attack, he forgot to give the signal to the rest of the Greeks. For this reason they did not hurry up to his support at once or in regular formation, but came straggling along in small groups after the battle had already begun.

Pausanias offered sacrifice to the gods, but since he received no favourable omens, he ordered the Spartans to sit quiet, with their shields planted in the ground in front of them and to wait for his orders without attempting to resist, while he sacrificed again. By now the Persian cavalry had started to charge, and soon they were within bowshot and the Spartans began to be hit by their arrows. It was then that Callicrates, who was reputed to be the handsomest and the tallest man in the Greek army, was struck by an arrow. As he lay dying, he declared that he did not grieve at his death, since he had left his home to die for Greece, but at dying without exchanging a single blow with the enemy. The troops were, indeed, suffering terribly, but their discipline was wonderful. They made no attempt to beat off the enemy who were attacking them, but simply waited for the word from their god and their general, while they were shot and struck down at their posts.

Some writers tell us that while Pausanias was sacrificing and praying at a little distance from the battle-line, a number of Lydians suddenly attacked him, snatching up and scattering the offerings for the sacri-

fice, and that Pausanias and his attendants beat them off with the sacrificial staves and whips; it is in imitation of this attack that they celebrate in Sparta to this day the ceremony of whipping young men round the altar and the procession of the Lydians which follows it.

18. Then Pausanias, almost in despair at what was happening, as the prophet sacrificed victim after victim, turned towards the temple of Hera with tears in his eyes and, lifting up his hands to heaven, prayed to Hera of Cithaeron and the other protecting deities of Plataea, that if it were not the gods' will that the Greeks should conquer, they might at least do some great deed before they fell and prove to their enemies that they had taken the field against brave men who knew how to fight. While Pausanias was imploring the gods, in the very midst of his prayer, the sacrifices were discovered to be favourable and the seer prophesied victory. The order was passed along the line to prepare for action, and suddenly there came over the whole phalanx the look of some ferocious beast, as it wheels at bay, stiffens its bristles and turns to defend itself, so that the barbarians could no longer doubt that they were faced with men who would fight to the death. The Persians therefore set up their great wicker shields like a wall in front of them and shot arrows at their opponents. But the Spartans, keeping their shields locked edge to edge as they advanced, threw themselves upon the enemy, wrenched away their wicker shields, and then thrust with their long spears at the faces and breasts of the Persians and slaughtered them in great numbers. In spite of this the Persians fought bravely and skilfully before they fell. They seized the long spears of the Greeks with their bare hands, snapped many of them off, and then closed in to fierce hand-to-hand fighting, using their daggers and scimitars, tearing away their enemies' shields and grappling with them, and in this way they held out for a long time.

Meanwhile the Athenians had been quietly waiting for the Spartans. But when the loud shouts of men locked in battle fell on their ears, and a messenger arrived from Pausanias, so it is said, telling them what had happened, they hurried up to reinforce him. Then, as they were crossing the plain towards the noise of the battle, the renegade Greeks advanced towards them. As soon as Aristides caught sight of them, he went on far ahead and called out in a loud voice, appealing to them in the name of the gods of Greece. He urged that they should stay out of the battle and not oppose or hinder the Athenians on their

way to help men who were risking their lives for their country's sake. However, when he saw that they were taking no notice, but had already formed up for battle, he turned aside from the attempt to relieve the Spartans and engaged the Greeks, who numbered some fifty thousand. The greater part of their force at once gave way and retired, especially when they saw that the barbarians were also in retreat. Here the heaviest of the fighting is said to have been with the Thebans, whose leading and most influential citizens had at that time enthusiastically taken the Persian side and had carried the people with them, not of their own free will, but because they were ruled by an oligarchy.

19. The battle was thus divided into two parts. The Spartans were the first to rout the Persians. Mardonius was killed by a Spartan named Arimnestus, who crushed in his head with a stone, just as the oracle at the shrine of Amphiaraüs had prophesied to him. Mardonius had sent a Lydian to this oracle and also a Carian to the oracle of Trophonius. The latter was actually addressed by the prophet in the Carian tongue, but the Lydian, when he lay down to sleep in the sacred enclosure which surrounds the temple of Apollo, dreamed that one of the god's attendants stood at his side and commanded him to be gone, and when he refused, hurled down a great stone on his head, so that in his dream he was killed by the blow. This is the story which is told of Mardonius. The Spartans also drove the Persians, who were now in utter rout, to take refuge inside their wooden stockade.

Not long after this, the Athenians overcame the Thebans and killed 300 of their leading citizens in the action itself. They might have killed more, but just as the Thebans were in headlong retreat, a messenger reached the Athenians telling them that the barbarian army was shut up and surrounded inside its fortified camp. So they allowed the Greeks to escape and themselves marched to help assault the camp. Here they found that the Spartans, who were inexperienced at attacking fortifications, were making slow progress, and they proceeded to storm the camp with an immense slaughter of the enemy. It is said that out of 300,000 men only 40,000 escaped with Artabazus. On the Greek side 1,360 were killed. Of these fifty-two were Athenians, all belonging to the tribe of Aiantis, according to Cleidemus, and it was this tribe which fought most bravely. For this reason the Aiantids used to sacrifice regularly to the nymphs of Sphragis the offerings which

the Pythian oracle at Delphi had demanded in return for the victory, and which were paid for out of the public funds. Ninety-one of the dead came from Sparta and sixteen from Tegea.

It is therefore very surprising that Herodotus should assert that these contingents, from Athens, Sparta, and Tegea, were the only Greeks who actually came to grips with the enemy and that none of the rest took part, for both the number of those who fell and the monuments which were erected over them are proofs that the victory was won by the combined action of all the Greeks. Besides, if the men of these three cities alone had fought, while the rest sat by and did nothing, the altar would not have been inscribed as it was:

Here did the Greeks, when with Ares' aid they had triumphed in battle,
Driven the Mede from their frontiers and delivered their country from bondage,
Set up an altar *together* for Zeus, Liberator of Greece.

This battle was fought on the fourth day of the month Boedromion according to the Athenian reckoning. But according to the Boeotian calendar it was on the twenty-seventh day of the month Panemus,[1] and on this day the Hellenic council still meets at Plataea and the Plataeans offer a sacrifice to Zeus the Liberator for the victory. We need not be surprised at the discrepancy between these dates, since even nowadays, when there is a far more accurate knowledge of astronomy, different cities still begin and end their months on different days.

20. After the battle the Athenians would not agree to award the prize for valour to the Spartans, or allow them to put up a general trophy. In fact, the cause of Greece might very well have been ruined there and then by the two parties going to war to settle their quarrel, had not Aristides by dint of a great deal of explanation and pacification restrained his colleagues, especially Leocrates and Myronides, and persuaded them to submit the dispute for the rest of the Greeks to decide. Upon this a council was held and Theogeiton the Megarian said that if they wanted to avoid all the turmoil of a civil war, the prize must be given to some third city. Then Cleocritus the Corinthian rose to speak and everybody supposed that he would claim the honour for Corinth, since Corinth was ranked next in prestige after Sparta and Athens. However, to the general surprise and delight, he spoke in

1. About 2 August 479 B.C.

favour of the Plataeans and argued that to give them the prize would remove every possible cause of friction, since neither of the claimants could take offence at their being honoured. Aristides was the first to accept this proposal on behalf of the Athenians and Pausanias followed suit for the Spartans. Having settled their differences in this way, they put aside eighty talents of the spoils for the Plataeans, with which they rebuilt the sanctuary of Athena, set up the shrine and decorated the temple with frescoes which have remained in perfect condition to this day. The Spartans then set up a trophy for themselves, while the Athenians set up a separate one.

When they inquired of the oracle at Delphi as to what sacrifice should be made, the Pythian god answered that they should set up an altar to Zeus the Liberator, but should not sacrifice on it until they had extinguished throughout the land the fire, which he said had been polluted by the barbarians, and had rekindled it, fresh and pure from the public altar at Delphi. Accordingly, the Greek commanders travelled round the territory of Plataea and compelled all those who were using fire to put it out. Meanwhile, Euchidas, who promised to fetch the fire with the utmost speed, went from Plataea to Delphi. There he purified his body by sprinkling himself with holy water and was crowned with laurel. Then he took the sacred fire from the altar and set out to run back to Plataea; he arrived there before sunset, having covered 125 miles in a single day. He embraced his fellow-citizens, handed them the sacred fire, and then at once collapsed and a little afterwards died. In token of their admiration the Plataeans buried him in the sanctuary of Artemis Eucleia and carved this verse in tetrameters on his tomb:

Euchidas, who ran to Delphi, came back here the self-same day.

Most people believe that Eucleia is the goddess Artemis and address her by that name. But there are some who say that she was the child of Heracles and of that Myrto who was the daughter of Menoetius and sister of Patroclus, and that she died a virgin and was worshipped by the Boeotians and Locrians. An altar and a statue dedicated to her stand in every market-place, and couples who are about to marry offer sacrifice to her.

21. After this at a general assembly of the Greeks Aristides moved a resolution that delegates and religious representatives from all the

Greek states should meet every year at Plataea, and that every four years the Eleutheria, or festival games in honour of freedom, should be celebrated. There was also to be a levy to raise a combined Greek force consisting of 10,000 infantry, 1,000 horse and 100 ships to carry on the war against the barbarians, but the Plataeans were to be exempted and treated as a dedicated and sacrosanct people, who would offer sacrifice to Zeus the Deliverer on behalf of all Greece.

These proposals were ratified, and the Plataeans undertook to offer up a sacrifice to the dead every year in honour of those Greeks who had fallen in battle and were buried on the field, and this ceremony they still carry out to this day in the following manner. On the sixteenth day of the month Maimacterion, which is the Boeotian Alalcomenius, they conduct a procession. This is led forth at daybreak by a trumpeter who sounds the charge: after him come waggons full of myrtle leaves and garlands, and then a black bull. These are followed by young men of free birth who carry libations of wine and milk in jars and pitchers of olive-oil and myrrh, and no slave is allowed to play any part in the ceremony, since the men who are being honoured gave their lives for freedom. Last of all comes the chief magistrate of Plataea, who for the rest of his term of office is forbidden to touch iron or to wear clothes of any colour but white, but on this occasion is dressed in a scarlet tunic. He carries aloft an urn from the public record office and proceeds, sword in hand, through the middle of the city to the tombs. There with his own hands he takes water from the sacred spring, washes the gravestones, and anoints them with myrrh. Then he slaughters the bull by the funeral pyre, offers prayers to Zeus and to Hermes of the Underworld, and calls upon the brave men who died for Greece to come to the banquet and drink the libations of blood. After this he mixes a bowl of wine and water, drinks and pours a libation from it, saying these words: 'I drink to the men who died for the freedom of Greece.' These rites have been observed by the Plataeans down to the present day.

22. After the Athenians had returned home, it became clear to Aristides that they wanted to adopt the democratic form of government. Because of the bravery the people had shown he believed that their wishes deserved to be considered, and he understood at the same time that they were now strongly armed, were full of confidence from their victories and would not easily be turned from their purpose. So

he introduced a decree[1] whereby every citizen would have a share in the government and the archons would in future be elected from the whole body of voters.

Themistocles once announced to the people that he had a plan which would prove of great advantage to the state and ensure its security, but which could not be discussed openly. So the Assembly ruled that the scheme should be confided to Aristides alone and that he should give his verdict on it. Themistocles then told Aristides that his proposal was to burn the naval station of the allied Greek fleet: in this way Athens would become the most powerful state in Greece and could dominate all the rest. Aristides then came before the Assembly and pronounced that nothing could be more advantageous than Themistocles' proposal, and nothing more iniquitous, and when they heard this the Athenians ordered Themistocles to abandon his scheme. Such was the measure of the people's regard for justice and also of Aristides' loyal and faithful service to them.

23. When he was sent out as general with Cimon to carry on the war with Persia,[2] he noticed how harshly and offensively Pausanias and the other Spartan commanders behaved to the allies. He himself treated them with courtesy and consideration and saw to it that Cimon made himself accommodating to them and took part in their operations. In this way, before the Spartans knew it, he had eased them out of the leadership, and he did this not with the help of troops or ships or cavalry, but through tact and diplomacy. The Athenians were already well liked, thanks to the justice of Aristides and the affability shown by Cimon, but the grasping and overbearing conduct of Pausanias served to endear them to the Greeks even more. The allied commanders were constantly treated with arrogance and ill-temper by Pausanias, and their men were punished with floggings or by being forced to stand all day with an iron anchor on their shoulders. No one was allowed to get straw for bedding, or fodder for his horse, or to draw water until the Spartans had helped themselves, and their servants, who were armed with whips, would drive away anyone who approached. Aristides once intended to tax Pausanias with this and

1. This account of Aristides' democratic reforms conflicts directly with Aristotle's version (*Constitution of Athens*, xxiii–xxv), and the latter must be regarded as the more reliable authority.

2. 478 B.C.

expostulate with him, but he put on a frown, told Aristides that he was occupied and refused to listen to him.

After this the generals and admirals of the Greek expedition, especially those of Chios, Samos, and Lesbos, approached Aristides and pressed him to accept the supreme command and rally around him the allies who had long wished to be quit of Sparta and to transfer their support to Athens. Aristides told them that he regarded their proposals as both necessary and just, but that to secure the Athenians' confidence some action was needed which would make it impossible for the majority to change their allegiance later on. Accordingly, Uliades of Samos and Antagoras of Chios arranged matters between themselves and ran down Pausanias's trireme off Byzantium, closing in on it as it was sailing ahead of the line. When Pausanias saw this, he sprang up in fury and threatened that he would soon show the world that what these men had damaged was not his ship but their own cities. They told him to go his way and be thankful for the fortune which had fought on his side at Plataea, for it was only out of reverence for this that the Greeks did not punish him as he deserved. Finally they stood off and sailed away to join the Athenians.

In this situation the Spartans gave an extraordinary demonstration of their greatness of spirit. When they saw that their leaders' heads had been turned by the immense powers entrusted to them, they voluntarily withdrew from the supreme command and ceased to send generals to carry on the war, preferring to have their citizens behave with moderation and abide by their traditional customs, instead of lording it over the rest of Greece.

24. Even at the beginning, while the Spartans were in command, the Greeks had made a certain contribution towards the war, but now they wanted each city to be assessed at a fair rate. So they applied to the Athenians for the services of Aristides and appointed him to survey the various territories and their revenues, and then to fix their contributions according to each member's worth and ability to pay. But, although he was invested with such wide powers, and although Greece put its entire property, as it were, into his hands, he went out on his mission[1] a poor man and came back poorer still, and he drew up the list of assessments not only with scrupulous integrity and justice, but also in such a way that all the states felt they had been

1. 478–477 B.C.

appropriately and satisfactorily dealt with. Just as the ancients used to sing the praises of the age of Cronos and call it the golden age, so did the Athenians' allies honour this levy of Aristides, and call it a blessed event for Greece: they must have felt this all the more, when not long afterwards the levy was doubled and later trebled. The tax which Aristides imposed amounted to 460 talents,[1] but Pericles must have increased this by almost one third, for Thucydides tells us that when the Peloponnesian war began, the Athenians had a revenue of 600 talents from their allies.[2] After Pericles died, the demagogues gradually increased it to a total of 1,300 talents. The reason for this was not so much that the war, because of its length and its various changes of fortune, became prodigiously expensive, as that the demagogues themselves had led the people into accepting doles, money for public entertainments and the erection of temples and statues.

In this way Aristides earned a great and almost legendary reputation for the assessment of the revenues. Themistocles, however, is said to have sneered at him and remarked that all this was no praise for a man, but rather for a money-box. But this was no more than a clumsy retort to a saying of Aristides', who, when Themistocles had given his opinion that the greatest virtue in a general is the power to recognize and anticipate the enemy's intentions, had answered: 'Certainly you cannot do without that, Themistocles, but the honourable thing and the quality which makes a real general is the power to keep his hands clean.'

25. It was Aristides who made all the Greeks swear to maintain the alliance against the Persians, and he himself took the oath for Athens and to solemnize it threw wedges of red-hot iron[3] into the sea. But later on, when circumstances compelled the Athenians to rule with a stronger hand, he told his countrymen to act in whatever way suited their interests best and to lay the blame for any breach of their oath upon him. In general, as Theophrastus tells us, Aristides was scrupulously fair in his private dealings and relations with his fellow-citizens, but in public affairs he often followed whatever policy his country had adopted, recognizing that this must involve a good deal of injus-

1. These are Thucydides' figures, but it is probable that the estimate is too high for Aristides' period.

2. Thucydides, ii, 13.

3. These were to symbolize an alliance that would last until the metal floated to the surface.

tice on occasion. He mentions, for example, that when, on the motion of the Samians, the question of transferring the funds of the confederacy from Delos to Athens – which was contrary to the terms of the alliance – was being debated, Aristides said that the proposal was unjust, but that it was to Athens' advantage. And yet this man who finally established the sovereignty of his city over so many Greeks himself remained in a state of poverty, and indeed continued to prize his reputation as a poor man as much as any distinction he had won from his triumphs in the field. This fact is evident from the following story.

Callias, the Torchbearer[1] in the Eleusinian Mysteries, who was related to him, was being prosecuted by his enemies on a capital charge. At first his accusers stated their case in moderate terms, but then they stepped right outside the scope of their indictment and appealed to the jury as follows: 'You know Aristides, the son of Lysimachus, and how he is the admiration of all Greece. How do you suppose he lives at home, when you see him coming into the Assembly with the threadbare cloak he wears? Is it not likely that a man who shivers in public also goes hungry in his own house and cannot afford even the bare necessities of life? But Callias, who is the richest man in Athens, allows his own cousin, to say nothing of his wife and children, to suffer want, although he has often made use of Aristides and profited from his influence with you.' Callias saw that this appeal had made a deep impression on the jury and had gone far to turn them against him. So he called Aristides into court and demanded that he should testify that although Callias had frequently offered him help and pressed him to accept it, he had always refused and replied that he had better cause to be proud of his poverty than Callias of his wealth. There were plenty of rich men to be seen who used their money well or badly, but it was not easy to find a man who could support poverty with honour. In fact, the only people who should be ashamed of poverty are those who are poor against their will. When Aristides had confirmed Callias's evidence, there was not one of his audience who did not leave the court feeling that he would rather be poor with Aristides than rich with Callias. This, at any rate, is the story which Aeschines the Socratic has recorded. Plato, too, gives his opinion that of all the men who enjoyed great names and reputations at Athens, Aristides is the only one who deserves our praise. Themistocles and

1. See also Ch. 5.

Cimon and Pericles, he tells us, filled the city with colonnades and treasures and all kinds of nonsense, but Aristides tried to lead the city to virtue.[1]

There is no stronger proof of his fairmindedness than his treatment of Themistocles. Themistocles had been his enemy at almost every stage of his political career, and Aristides' ostracism was directly due to his efforts. Yet when Themistocles was publicly accused and his opponent had the chance to turn the tables, Aristides bore him no malice. In fact, when Alcmaeon and Cimon and many others joined in denouncing and prosecuting him, Aristides was the only man who neither did nor said anything mean, and just as earlier he had never grudged his success, so now he refused to take advantage of his enemy's downfall.

26. Some writers say that Aristides died[2] in Pontus, where he had sailed on an expedition in the public service, and others that he died of old age in Athens, honoured and admired by his countrymen. But Craterus the Macedonian tells us something like this about his last days. After Themistocles had gone into exile, he says, the people became unruly and there sprang up a host of informers who constantly attacked the most gifted and influential citizens and worked up the envy of the masses against them, now that the people's heads had been turned by their power and prosperity. Even Aristides became one of their victims, and he was prosecuted on a charge of bribery by a certain Diophantus of the deme of Amphitrope and convicted of having received money from the Ionians while he was settling their tax-assessments. As he could not pay the fine of fifty minae, he sailed from Athens and died somewhere in Ionia. On the other hand Craterus offers no documentary evidence of this, neither the sentence of the court nor the decree of the people, although it is his usual habit to record such matters very carefully and to quote his authorities. Here I may mention that all the other writers who have described the injustices suffered by the leading men of Athens at the hands of the people dwell upon the banishment of Themistocles, the imprisonment of Miltiades, the fine imposed on Pericles, and Paches' death in the court-room – he killed himself on the rostrum when the verdict

1. *Gorgias*, 518, 526.

2. The date of his death is uncertain. It may have taken place in 468 and probably not later than 464 B.C.

was pronounced against him. They group many such instances together and include among them the ostracism of Aristides, but they make no mention of this conviction for bribery.

27. Besides this, his tomb is still to be seen at Phalerum and the tradition is that it was built at the public expense, since Aristides did not leave enough money even to pay for his funeral. It is also said that the state paid for his daughters to be married from the Prytaneum and voted 3,000 drachmae outright to each daughter as a dowry. His son, Lysimachus, was provided for in a bill introduced by Alcibiades, which presented him with 100 minae in silver, the same number of acres of vineyard, and a pension of four drachmae a day. Besides this Callisthenes tells us that Lysimachus left a daughter, Polycrite, and the people voted her a daily allowance of food, in the same way as they did for victors at the Olympic Games. Demetrius of Phalerum, Hieronymus of Rhodes, Aristoxenus the musician and Aristotle, assuming that the treatise *On Nobility of Birth* is a genuine work of his, also tell us that Myrto, Aristides' grand-daughter, lived in the house of Socrates the philosopher. He was, in fact, married to another woman, but he took Myrto into his household because she was almost destitute and her poverty forced her to remain a widow. However, Panaetius has disposed of this story effectively enough in his book on Socrates.

Demetrius of Phalerum in his book on Socrates writes that he remembers a descendant of Aristides named Lysimachus, who was extremely poor and who used to sit by the temple known as the Lacheium, making a living by means of a tablet which he claimed could interpret dreams. Demetrius persuaded the people to pass a decree awarding this man's mother and sister a pension of three obols a day, though he says that later, when he became sole Lawgiver himself, he allowed a drachma a day to each of the women instead of three obols.

We need not be surprised to hear that the people took such care of families living in Athens. We read, for example, that when they learned that Aristogeiton's grand-daughter was living in humble circumstances in Lemnos and was so poor that nobody would marry her, the people brought her back to Athens, arranged a marriage with a man of good family and gave her the estate in Potamus for her dowry. The city of Athens has given many such examples of humanity and goodness of heart even in my own day, and for this she is justly praised and admired.

5

CIMON

[*c.* 507 – 449 B.C.]

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PERIPOLTAS the prophet, after he had led king Opheltas and his subjects from Thessaly into Boeotia, founded a line which remained famous for many generations. The majority of them settled in Chaeronea, which was the first city they conquered when they drove out the barbarians. Now most of his descendants were men of great courage, natural fighters who spared themselves so little that after the Persian invasions and the campaigns against the Gauls the family almost died out. One of the survivors, however, was an orphan surnamed Peripoltas, whose first name was Damon, and who stood out among all the youths of his age for his proud spirit and exceptional physical beauty, although apart from this he was uneducated and harsh-tempered.

The Roman commander of a cohort which was quartered for the winter in Chaeronea fell in love with this Damon, who was only just past his boyhood. This officer found that he could not win over the youth by importunity or by offering him presents, but before long it became clear that he would not stop at using force, knowing as he did that our city's fortunes at that time had sunk to a low ebb and that she was neglected because of her poverty and insignificance. This was just what Damon feared, and since he had been angered by the very attentions the Roman paid him, he laid a plot against him with some of his companions, though he kept their numbers small for the sake of secrecy. There were sixteen of them in all. One night they daubed their faces with soot, drank unmixed wine to nerve themselves, and at daybreak fell upon the Roman officer as he was offering sacrifice in the market-place. They killed him with a number of his men and then fled from the city. During the uproar which followed, the

senate of Chaeronea met and pronounced sentence of death on the murderers, and this constituted the defence which was later offered to the Romans on the city's behalf. But that evening, while the chief magistrates were dining together, according to their custom, Damon and his band broke into the city-hall, massacred them and once again made their escape.

It happened that at about that time[1] Lucius Lucullus was passing by Chaeronea in command of a body of troops upon some expedition. He interrupted his march and held an inquiry while these events were still fresh in mind. His findings were that the city was not to blame for what had happened, but was rather itself the injured party, and he withdrew the Roman garrison and took them away with him. As for Damon, who was now making marauding raids, pillaging the countryside, and threatening the city itself, the Chaeroneans lured him back by sending a deputation and passing various decrees to conciliate him, and after his return they appointed him gymnasiarch: then, a little later, as he was anointing himself one day in the public baths, they killed him. Our ancestors tell us that for a long time afterwards apparitions were seen in the place and groans were heard, and so the doors of the baths were walled up. Even to this day those who live nearby believe that this building is still haunted by terrifying sights and sounds. There are other members of Damon's family who are still living, mostly in the neighbourhood of Stiris in Phocis, and who speak the Aeolian dialect. They are known as the *asbolomeni* or sooty-faced, because of Damon's having smeared his face with soot before he went out to commit the murder.

2. Now the people of Orchomenus, who were neighbours of the Chaeroneans and on bad terms with them, hired a Roman informer who laid a charge against the city, as if it were an individual, for the murder of the soldiers killed by Damon. The trial was held before the praetor of Macedonia, for the Romans at that time did not appoint praetors to Greece proper, and the counsel who were defending Chaeronea cited Lucullus's findings. Lucullus, when the praetor wrote to him, gave the true version of the affair, and in this way the city escaped what had been a very serious danger of conviction on a capital charge. So the people, who owed their deliverance to Lucullus on that occasion, erected a marble statue to him in the market-place,

1. 74 B.C.

next to the statue of Dionysus. And I, too, although several generations removed from him, believe that his favour extends to our people even down to the present day; and since I am convinced that a portrait which reveals a man's character and inner qualities possesses a far greater beauty than one which merely reproduces his face and physical appearance, I shall describe Lucullus's achievements in my *Parallel Lives* and report them exactly. Indeed, merely to mention them is to offer him thanks enough, since he himself would certainly refuse to accept a false or highly coloured account of his career in return for the true testimony he gave on our behalf.

When an artist has to paint a face which possesses fair and handsome features, we demand that he should neither exaggerate nor leave out any minor defect he may find in it, since in the first case this would make the portrait ugly, and in the second destroy the likeness. In the same way, since it is difficult, or rather impossible, to represent a man's life as entirely spotless and free from blame, we should use the best chapters in it to build up the most complete picture and regard this as the true likeness. Any errors or crimes, on the other hand, which may tarnish a man's career and may have been committed out of passion or political necessity, we should regard rather as lapses from a particular virtue than as the product of some innate vice. We must not dwell on them too emphatically in our history, but should rather show indulgence to human nature for its inability to produce a character which is absolutely good and uncompromisingly dedicated to virtue.

3. So when I considered whom I should compare to Lucullus, I concluded that it must be Cimon. Both of them were men of war, and both gained brilliant successes against the barbarians. Yet they were also moderate statesmen who succeeded better than any others in giving their countries a breathing space in which to recover from the violence of party strife, though each of them set up trophies and won resounding victories. Leaving aside the legends of Heracles, or Dionysus, or Jason, or those exploits of Perseus against the Ethiopians, the Medes, and the Armenians of which any credible record has come down to us, we may say that no Greek before Cimon and no Roman before Lucullus ever carried his wars into such distant lands. On the other hand in both men's campaigns the element of finality was lacking. Each of them crushed his opponent without finishing him off. In

particular we find in both the same open-handed abundance in their fondness for entertaining and their generosity to others, and the same youthful laxity in their way of living. I need not mention every point of resemblance between them, since the reader will find it easy to discover others in the course of my narrative.

4. Cimon was the son of Miltiades and his mother was Hegesipyle, a woman of Thracian descent, the daughter of king Olorus, as we learn from the poems of Archelaus and Melanthius addressed to Cimon himself. This explains the fact that Thucydides the historian was also connected with Cimon's family as the name of Olorus, their common ancestor, had descended to his father, and also how he was the owner of gold mines in Thrace.[1] It is said, too, that Thucydides was murdered at Skapte Hyle, a place in Thrace: but his remains were brought to Athens and his monument is to be seen among those of Cimon's family near the tomb of Cimon's sister, Elpinice. Thucydides, however, belonged to the deme of Halimus, while Miltiades' family belonged to the deme of Lacia.

Miltiades had been condemned by the Athenians to pay a fine of fifty talents. He was thrown into prison until he could find the money, and there he died.[2] Cimon, who was scarcely more than a boy, was thus left with his sister, who was also young and unmarried. For some time his career was entirely undistinguished, except that he earned a bad name for disorderly behaviour, heavy drinking, and in general for taking after his grandfather, Cimon, who was said to have been so stupid that he was nicknamed Coalemus, or The Booby. Stesimbrotus of Thasos, who was a near contemporary of Cimon's, says that he never acquired a literary education[3] or any other of the liberal accomplishments which a Greek normally possessed, and that he was without a spark of the true Attic cleverness and eloquence; on the other hand he adds that his manner gave an impression of great nobility and candour and that the spirit of the man seemed altogether more Peloponnesian than Athenian,

1. See also Thucydides, iv, 105.

2. In 489 B.C. when Cimon was probably only eighteen.

3. Cimon may well have received the traditional education of an Athenian gentleman of this period. What he conspicuously lacked was the type of education Pericles was to display, and which included an interest in science and speculative philosophy.

His nature was unadorned
Forthright and at its best in times of crisis.

as Euripides wrote of Heracles, and we may add this judgement to the character Stesimbrotus has given Cimon.

While he was still a young man, he was accused of having committed incest with his sister. Indeed, Elpinice is said to have been careless of her virtue on other occasions, too, and to have been the mistress of Polygnotus the painter. This is the origin of the story that when he was painting the Trojan women in what was then called the Peisianacteum, but is now the Painted Colonnade, he introduced Elpinice's features into the portrait of Laodice. Polygnotus was far from being a mere craftsman and he did not make a contract to decorate the Colonnade, but undertook the work for nothing simply out of the desire to honour his city. We learn this from the historians and from the poet Melanthius, who wrote:

He at his own expense adorned the Cecropian market
And the gods' temples: his theme told of the heroes' great deeds.

Others have said that there was nothing clandestine about Elpinice's relations with Cimon, but that she lived quite openly with him as his wife, because she was too poor to find a husband worthy of her noble birth, and that when Callias, one of the richest men in Athens, fell in love with her and offered to pay off the fine which had been inflicted on her father, Miltiades, she accepted his proposal and Cimon gave her away to Callias.

In spite of this there is no doubt that Cimon was especially prone to form passionate attachments to women. The poet Melanthius, in some playful elegiac verses addressed to Cimon, refers to Asteria, who belonged to a family from Salamis, and also to Mnestra as having been courted by him. We know, too, that he was deeply, almost extravagantly devoted to Isodice, the daughter of Euryptolemus and grand-daughter of Megacles, who was his lawful wife, and was left inconsolable when she died, if we may judge from the elegy written to comfort him in his grief. Panaetius thinks that the author of this was Archelaus, the writer on natural science, and the date, at least, makes this a reasonable surmise.

5. All the other elements in Cimon's character are noble and deserve our admiration. He was as brave as Miltiades and as intelligent

as Themistocles, and he is generally admitted to have been a juster man than either. In all the qualities which war demands he was fully their equal, and in statesmanship he showed himself immeasurably their superior, even when he was quite young and inexperienced in military matters. When the Medes invaded Greece and Themistocles was urging the people to hand over their city, abandon their country, mobilize their forces on board the fleet off Salamis, and fight out the issue at sea, the majority shrank from the audacity of his scheme. But Cimon was the first to set a public example, and cheerfully led a procession of his comrades through the Cerameicus up to the Acropolis. He carried in his hands a horse's bridle to offer up to the goddess, in token of the fact that what the city needed at that moment was not knightly valour, but men to fight at sea. When he had dedicated the bridle, he took one of the shields that were hanging up around the temple, uttered a prayer to the goddess, and then went down to the sea; and because of this action many of his countrymen began to take heart again.

His physical presence was imposing, too, as Ion the poet tells us, for he was tall with a thick and curly head of hair. And as he proved himself a brilliant and courageous soldier in the battle of Salamis, he quickly won not only the praise but also the hearts of his countrymen. Many of them flocked to him and urged him to plan and carry out at once some enterprise which would be worthy of his father's exploits at Marathon. So when he first entered politics the Athenians welcomed him gladly; they had had enough of Themistocles and they proceeded to promote Cimon to the highest honours and offices in the state, for his gentleness and simplicity greatly endeared him to the people. But it was Aristides, the son of Lysimachus, who contributed more than anyone else to his advancement. He had recognized the innate excellence of Cimon's character and he now set him up as a counterpoise to the cleverness and audacity of Themistocles.

6. After the Medes had been driven from Greece, Cimon was sent out as one of the commanders of the Greek expeditionary force,[1] at a time when the Athenians had not yet won their supremacy at sea and were still under the orders of Pausanias and the Spartans. During these campaigns the soldiers whom Cimon sent out on operations were not only a byword for their discipline, but also far excelled the

1. 478–477 B.C.

others in the enterprise they showed. At that time, too, Pausanias was carrying on treasonable negotiations with the barbarians and writing letters to the king of Persia, but treating his own allies harshly and arrogantly and scattering insults far and wide with his officiousness and absurd pretensions. Cimon, on the other hand, had a kind word for all who brought grievances to him and dealt with them so sympathetically that almost before people knew what was happening he had taken over the command of the Greeks, and he achieved this not by force of arms but simply by virtue of his character and his skill in handling men. Most of the allies, finding they could not endure the harshness and contempt with which they were treated by Pausanias, put themselves under the orders of Aristides and Cimon, who as soon as they had won this following, sent word to the ephors to recall Pausanias, since he was bringing dishonour to Sparta and disunity to Greece.

There is a story that Pausanias sent for a Byzantine girl of noble family named Cleonice to seduce her, and that her parents, believing they had no choice, and too frightened to refuse, abandoned their daughter to him. Cleonice begged the attendants outside his door to take away the lights, and crept silently in the darkness towards the bed on which Pausanias was asleep, but then she accidentally stumbled against the lamp-stand and knocked it down. Pausanias was alarmed at the noise, and thinking that some enemy was about to set upon him, snatched up the dagger at his side and struck the girl down, giving her a mortal wound. After her death, her spirit would not let Pausanias rest, but kept appearing to him at night in his sleep, remorselessly repeating the words

Go to the doom which pride and lust prepare.

This outrageous affair provoked the allies beyond endurance and under Cimon's leadership they drove Pausanias out of the city. He fled from Byzantium, but finding himself still haunted by the apparition, so the story goes, he consulted the oracle of the dead at Heracleia. There he summoned up the spirit of Cleonice and implored her to pardon him. She then appeared to him and declared that he would soon be delivered from his troubles once he reached Sparta, in this way mysteriously hinting, it seems, at his approaching death. This, at any rate, is the story which many authors tell.

7. Now that the allies had come over to his side, Cimon assumed command and sailed to Thrace,[1] as he had heard that the Persians, led by some of their nobles, including some kinsmen of the king, were holding the city of Eïon on the banks of the Strymon and were harassing the Greeks in the neighbourhood. He began by defeating the Persians in a pitched battle and shutting them up inside the city. Next he drove the Thracian tribes who lived above the Strymon out of their territory, since they had been keeping the Persians supplied with provisions. Finally, by patrolling the whole region, he reduced the besieged garrison to such straits that the Persian general Butes decided his position was hopeless, set fire to the city, and perished with his whole family and his property in the flames.

For this reason when Cimon captured the city he found nothing of any value, as almost everything had been destroyed in the fire along with the barbarians. On the other hand the surrounding country was beautiful and extremely fertile, and this land he handed over to the Athenians to found a colony there. So the people authorized him to dedicate three stone statues of Hermes at Athens, the first of which bears the inscription:

They too were men of stout heart, who beside the swift current of Strymon
Under Eïon's walls fought with the sons of the Mede:
Pitiless famine and fire they brought to beleaguer the city,
Death-dealing Ares they followed, and harried their foes to despair,

the second:

This shall stand as the tribute which Athens paid to her leaders,
Homage to hard-fought victories, earned by their valiant deeds.
Those who come after may read and from this memorial take courage,
And in their country's cause march no less bravely to war,

and the third:

From this city Menestheus once marched out with the Atridae,
Leading his army to war on the divine plains of Troy.
None knew better than he, of the bronze-armoured Greeks, Homer tells us,
How to manœuvre the line or draw up the battle array.
So the proud title has clung ever since to the children of Athens,
Masters of warlike arts and leaders of valiant men.

1. 476–475 B.C.

8. Although Cimon's name does not appear in any of these inscriptions, his contemporaries regarded this memorial as a supreme mark of honour for him. Neither Themistocles nor Miltiades could boast of any comparable distinction; indeed, when the latter asked for nothing more than a crown of olive, Sophanes of Decelea rose to his feet in the Assembly and protested. His speech was ungracious, but it won the people's applause at that moment. 'When you have fought and conquered the barbarians by yourself, Miltiades,' he said, 'then you can ask to be honoured by yourself.'

What was it, then, in Cimon's achievements which gave such intense pleasure to the people? The answer is probably that under their other generals they had merely been defending themselves against attack and fighting for self-preservation, whereas under Cimon they had the opportunity to carry the war into their enemies' country and ravage it, and besides this they won new territory which they could colonize, not only Eion, but Amphipolis as well.

They also colonized Scyros, which Cimon captured for the following reason. The Dolopians, who lived on the island were quite unskilled at cultivating the soil. They had traditionally practised piracy on the high seas and at length they could not resist plundering even those ships which put into their ports and traded with them. Finally they robbed and imprisoned some Thessalian merchants who had anchored at Ctesium. These men escaped and secured a verdict against Scyros at the Amphictyonic Congress, whereupon the people of Scyros refused to pay compensation out of the public funds and ordered this to be done by the men who had actually stolen the goods and were still in possession of them. The robbers became frightened and sent a letter to Cimon urging him to come with his fleet and capture the city, which they offered to surrender to him. In this way Cimon made himself master of the island, expelled the Dolopians and freed the Aegean from pirates.

He also learned that the ancient hero Theseus, the son of Aegeus, had taken refuge in Scyros after being exiled from Athens, but had been treacherously killed there by the king Lycomedes who was afraid of him. The Athenians had once been given an oracle commanding them to bring back the bones of Theseus to Athens and pay them the honours due to a hero; but they did not know where he was buried, since the people of Scyros would neither admit that the story was true nor allow any search to be made. Cimon, however, attacked the task

with great enthusiasm and after some difficulty discovered the sacred spot. He had the bones placed on board his trireme and brought them back with great pomp and ceremony to the hero's native land, almost four hundred years after he had left it. This affair did more than any other achievement of Cimon's to endear him to the people.

They also remembered him for a verdict he gave in the contest between the tragic poets which afterwards became famous. When Sophocles, who was still a young man, presented his first trilogy, Apsephion the archon noticed that the spirit of rivalry and partisanship was running high among the audience and decided not to appoint the judges of the contest by lot, as was usually done. Instead, when Cimon and his fellow-generals entered the theatre and made the usual libation to the god Dionysus, he did not allow them to leave, but obliged them to take the oath and sit as judges, one from each tribe and ten of them in all. In consequence, the fact that the judges were so distinguished raised the whole contest to a far more ambitious level. Sophocles won the prize, and it is said that Aeschylus was so distressed and indignant that he stayed only a little while longer in Athens, before retiring in anger to Sicily. He died there, too, and is buried near the city of Gela.

9. Ion says that when he was still only a boy and had come from Chios to Athens, he met Cimon at a dinner at the house of Laomedon. After the meal, when the libations had been poured, Cimon was invited to sing and did so very agreeably, whereupon the company praised him as a more accomplished man than Themistocles. He, so the story went, had declared that he had never learned how to sing or play the lyre, but that he knew how to make a city rich and great. Later, Ion tells us, as was natural over the cups, the conversation turned upon Cimon's own achievements and the guests went on to recall the greatest of these. Cimon himself described one particular ruse, which he thought the cleverest thing he had done. The Athenians and their allies had taken a great number of barbarian prisoners at Sestos and Byzantium and had handed them over to him to divide between their various captors. Cimon placed the prisoners on one side and all their clothes and ornaments on the other. The allies then blamed him for distributing the shares unfairly, but he told them to make their own choice first and the Athenians would be content with whatever share they left. On the advice of Herophytus of Samos, who

told them to choose the Persians' possessions rather than the men themselves, the allies took the ornaments and left the prisoners to the Athenians. At the time Cimon was regarded as having made a fool of himself and come away with the worst of the bargain, since the allies could go about with gold anklets, bracelets, collars, jackets, and robes of purple, while the Athenians had gained nothing but a lot of naked bodies of men who were not even trained to work. But a little while after, the friends and relatives of the prisoners came down from Phrygia and Lydia and ransomed every one of them at a high price, so that Cimon received the equivalent of four months' maintenance for his fleet and still had a large sum of gold from these ransoms left over for the city.

10. Cimon was already a rich man, and so he saw to it that the money which he was credited with having won honourably from the enemy in his campaigns was spent even more honourably on his fellow-citizens. He had all the fences on his fields taken down, so that not only poor Athenians but even strangers could help themselves freely to whatever fruit was in season. He also provided a dinner at his house every day, a simple meal but enough for large numbers. Any poor man who wished could come to him for this, and so received a subsistence which cost him no effort and left him free to devote all his attention to public affairs. However, according to Aristotle, he did not provide this free dinner for all Athenians, but only for the members of his own deme, the people of Lacia. He always went about attended by a number of young men fitted out with good new clothes, each of whom was ready, if Cimon met some elderly and poorly dressed citizen, to change clothes with him, and this custom made a deep impression. The same attendants also carried with them plenty of ready money, and would go up to the better class of the poor in the marketplace and quietly slip some small change into their hands. This generosity is no doubt what Cratinus the comic poet is referring to in his *Archilochi*, when he says:

> I too, Metrobius, the public scribe, had hopes
> That I might pass away a sleek old age
> Feasting in comfort for the rest of my days
> With the godlike Cimon, most generous of men,
> In all his qualities the noblest son
> Of Greece. But he has gone ahead and left me.

Again Gorgias of Leontini says of Cimon that he made money only to spend it and spent it in a way that did him honour. And Critias, one of the Thirty Tyrants, utters a prayer in his elegiac verses for 'the wealth of the Scopadae, the magnanimity of Cimon and the victories of Arcesilaus of Sparta'.

We know that Lichas the Spartan became famous throughout Greece for no other reason than that he entertained the foreign visitors at the Gymnopaedia, the athletic festival in Sparta, at which the boys compete naked; but Cimon's generosity was on a scale that surpassed even the traditional hospitality and benevolence of the ancient Athenians. The city can justly boast of these men that they imparted the knowledge of how to sow corn, to discover springs and to kindle fire to the rest of the Greeks, who knew none of these things. But Cimon turned his home into a place of public resort for his fellow citizens, while on his country estates he allowed even foreigners to take the pick of the ripe fruit and to enjoy the best of whatever was in season. And so, in a sense, he restored to human experience the fabled conditions of the golden age of Cronos, when men owned everything in common. Those who spread the story that all this was only done to flatter the masses and curry favour with them were given the lie by his political principles, which were aristocratic and tended to be influenced by Sparta. Thus, for example, he joined with Aristides in opposing Themistocles, when the latter began to extend the authority of the people beyond its due limits; and later on he also resisted Ephialtes when, to please the people, he tried to dissolve the Council of the Areopagus. And though he saw all the other politicians, with the exception of Aristides and Ephialtes, filling their pockets from the public revenues, he kept himself incorruptible and inaccessible to any bribe and invariably acted and spoke with integrity and without any thought of reward.

It is said that a certain Rhoesaces, a barbarian who had deserted the king of Persia, came to Athens with large sums of money. He was hunted down by the public informers and took refuge with Cimon, at whose door he left two platters, one filled with silver and the other with golden darics. Cimon smiled when he saw these and asked the man whether he preferred to have Cimon as his hired agent or as his friend. 'As my friend,' he replied. 'Well, then,' said Cimon, 'take this money away with you. If I am your friend, I shall be able to use it whenever I want.'

11. As time went on, the allies continued to pay their contributions to the war against Persia, but they did not provide men or ships on the scale that had been laid down for them. They soon became tired of foreign expeditions, for they felt they no longer needed to fight, and only wanted to live in peace and till their lands. The barbarians had gone away and no longer troubled them and so they neither provided crews for their warships nor sent out troops. The Athenian generals tried to force them into fulfilling their duties, and by penalizing the defaulters and punishing them they soon made the authority of Athens an imposition which was thoroughly disliked. Cimon, however, when he was general, did exactly the opposite. He did not bring force to bear upon any of the Greeks and he accepted money or empty ships from all those peoples who were unwilling to serve abroad. In this way he let the allies yield to the temptation of taking their ease and attending to nothing but their private affairs, until they had lost all their military qualities and become unwarlike farmers and traders through their own folly and love of comfort. On the other hand he obliged a large part of the Athenian population to take turns in manning their ships and hardened them on his various expeditions, and thus in a short while, using the funds the allies had contributed, he made the Athenians the rulers of the very men who paid them. Those Greeks who did no military service came to fear and even to flatter men who were regularly at sea or constantly training or under arms, and so before they knew it, they had sunk into the position of tributaries and subjects instead of allies.

12. It is certain that no man did more than Cimon to humble the pride of the Great King himself. He never relaxed the pursuit, so as to let the Persians escape from Greece at their leisure, but followed close at their heels, and before the barbarians could halt or draw breath, he had sacked or destroyed some cities, and induced others to revolt or annexed them, until not a single Persian soldier was left on the mainland of Asia Minor from Ionia to Pamphylia. He got word that the king's generals were lying in wait for him with a large army and fleet on the coast of Pamphylia, and he thereupon resolved to make the waters to the west of the Chelidonian Islands so formidable to them that they would not dare to venture out there. So he sailed from Cnidus and Triopium with 200 triremes.[1] These ships had been built

1. About 467 B.C.

under Themistocles and were especially well constructed from the point of view of speed and manoeuvrability, but Cimon now widened their beam and built bridges between their decks, so that when they attacked the enemy they could make more effective use of the large number of hoplites they carried. He put in at the city of Phaselis, but the people, although they were Greeks, refused to admit his fleet or to revolt against the king, and so he devastated their land and attacked the city's walls. However, the Chians who were serving in his fleet and were old friends of the people of Phaselis tried to pacify Cimon, and at the same time shot arrows over the walls with papers attached to them telling the people inside what they were doing. Finally, Cimon came to terms with them, on condition that they paid him ten talents and took part in his campaign against the barbarians.

According to the historian Ephorus, Tithraustes was in command of the royal fleet and Pherendates of the land forces. However, Callisthenes' version is that Arimandes, the son of Gobryas, was in command of the whole force, that he stayed at anchor with the fleet off the mouth of the Eurymedon and was not at all anxious to engage the Greeks, but was waiting for eighty Phoenician ships to arrive from Cyprus. Cimon planned to attack before this contingent could reach him and put to sea prepared to bring the enemy to battle if they tried to avoid it. At first the Persians retired up the river to avoid being forced into an action, but when the Athenians bore down on them they sailed out to meet Cimon. Phanodemus credits them with 600 ships and Ephorus with 350. At any rate, in the naval battle they certainly achieved nothing worthy of such a strong force, in fact, they immediately turned tail and ran for the shore. The leading crews abandoned their ships and took refuge with the land forces, which were drawn up close by, while the rest were overtaken and killed and their ships destroyed. From this it is clear that the number of the barbarians' ships which went into action must have been very great, since although many probably escaped and many were destroyed, the Athenians still captured 200 prizes.

13. When the Persian land forces moved down to the shore against him, Cimon thought that the prospect of forcing a landing and then leading the exhausted Greeks against fresh troops many times their number was altogether too formidable. But then he saw that his men were buoyed up by the strength and courage that victory had given

them and were eager to come to grips with the barbarians. So he landed his hoplites, still hot from their fighting in the naval battle, and they raised a loud shout and charged the enemy at a run. The Persians stood their ground and met the attack resolutely and a furious battle developed, in which the Athenians lost some of the bravest and highest in rank of their soldiers. But at last, after a fierce struggle, they threw back the barbarians with great slaughter and captured the army and its camp which was full of all kinds of spoil.

In this way Cimon, like a champion athlete, carried off two victories in a single day. But although he had already surpassed the triumph of Salamis with a land battle and that of Plataea with another at sea, he went on to compete for yet another success. He learned that the eighty Phoenician ships which had taken no part in the battle had put in at Syedra, and so he sailed there at full speed, before the enemy commanders had learned of the fate of the main fleet and were still in a state of anxious suspense. For this reason they were all the more panic-stricken when he attacked. All their ships were destroyed and most of the crews perished with them. This blow so dashed the king's hopes that he accepted the terms of that notorious peace, whereby he agreed to stay away the distance of a whole day's ride from the Greek seaboard of Asia Minor and not to let a single warship or armoured vessel[1] sail west of the Cyanean and the Chelidonian Islands.

Callisthenes, however, maintains that the Persians never agreed to observe any such terms. He says that this was merely how they behaved in practice, because of the fear which the victory of the Eurymedon had implanted in them; and, indeed, they kept so far away from Greece that Pericles with a squadron of fifty and Ephialtes with no more than thirty ships sailed far beyond the Chelidonian Islands without meeting anything resembling a barbarian fleet. On the other hand the collection of Athenian decrees made by Craterus includes in its proper place a copy of the articles of this treaty, as though it had actually been concluded.[2] It is said, too, that the Athenians built an altar to Peace to commemorate this event and conferred high honours upon Callias who negotiated the treaty.

So much money was raised from the sale of the captured spoils that the Athenians were enabled to meet various public expenses and in

1. A ship armed with a ram.

2. This settlement has been much disputed by scholars, but opinion now tends to accept that a peace of some kind was arrived at in the mid-460s B.C.

particular to construct the southern wall of the Acropolis, all out of the treasure which they won from this campaign. It is said, too, that while the building of the Long Walls, known as 'The Legs', was completed at a later date, yet the original foundations were securely laid by Cimon: the work was obstructed by swamps and marshy ground, but he had huge quantities of rubble and heavy stones tamped down and paid for all this himself.

He was also the first to adorn the city with those spacious and elegant places of public resort, which not long after became popular to the point of abuse; he did this by planting the market-place with plane-trees and by transforming the Academy from a parched and barren wilderness into a well-watered grove, which he provided with shady paths to walk in and clear tracks for races.

14. Meanwhile, a number of the Persians who had been left in the Chersonese refused to surrender the territory, but called in the Thracian tribes from the interior to help them. They were contemptuous of Cimon, who had sailed up from Athens with only a very few triremes all told.[1] But in spite of this he took the offensive with his four ships and proceeded to capture their thirteen, drive out the Persians, subdue the Thracians, and secure the whole territory for the Athenians to colonize. Soon afterwards, when the people of Thasos revolted from Athens,[2] he defeated them at sea, captured thirty-three of their ships, besieged their city and forced it to surrender, annexed the gold-mines on the mainland opposite for Athens, and took over the neighbouring territory which had been ruled by the Thasians.

From this base he might easily, so the Athenians considered, have invaded Macedonia and seized possession of a large part of her territory. But because he had no wish to do this, he was accused of having been bought off by King Alexander, and his enemies combined to impeach him.[3] In his defence at the trial he told the judges that he was not, like some Athenians, the paid representative of rich Ionians or Thessalians, to be courted or rewarded for his services: if he were to represent anybody's interests it would be the Spartans', whose simplicity and moderation he was glad to imitate. He added that he preferred these qualities to any amount of riches, but took pride in enriching

1. 466 B.C.
2. 465 B.C.
3. 463 B.C.

his own city with the spoils he won from her enemies. In mentioning this trial Stesimbrotus says that Elpinice came to Pericles' house to plead with him for her brother, since he was the most determined of Cimon's accusers, and he adds that Pericles smiled and said: 'You are long past the age, Elpinice, to take a hand in affairs like this.' However, at the trial he proved the mildest of Cimon's prosecutors and rose only once to press the charges against him, as though his doing so were a mere formality.

15. So Cimon was acquitted[1] on this occasion. During the rest of his political career he succeeded in arresting and even reducing the encroachments of the people upon the prerogatives of the aristocracy, and in foiling their attempts to concentrate office and power in their own hands, but only for as long as he was at Athens. The next time that he sailed away on foreign service,[2] the people broke loose from all control. They overthrew the established order of the constitution and the ancestral customs which they had always observed up to that moment, and following Ephialtes' lead they deprived the Council of the Areopagus of all but a few of the issues which had been under its jurisdiction. They took control of the courts of justice and transformed the city into a thorough-going democracy with the help of Pericles, who had now risen to power and committed himself to the cause of the people. So it was that when Cimon came home and, in his disgust at the humiliation of the once revered Areopagus, tried to restore its judicial powers and revive the aristocratic regime of Cleisthenes, the democratic leaders combined to denounce him and tried to stir up the people against him by bringing up all the old scandals about his sister and accusing him of pro-Spartan sympathies. These are the slanders referred to in Eupolis's well-known verses:

> He was not such a scoundrel as they go,
> Only too lazy and too fond of drinking,
> And often he would spend the night in Sparta
> And leave Elpinice to sleep alone.

On the other hand, if in spite of his indolent good nature and his fondness for the bottle he could still capture so many cities and win so many battles, there can be no doubt that had he been normally

1. We learn from other sources that he was fined fifty talents and only had a majority of three votes to save him from the death sentence.

2. 462 B.C.

sober and attentive to business, no Greek before or after him could have surpassed his exploits.

16. It is certainly true that from the very beginning of his career he was sympathetic to the Spartans. He actually named one of his three sons Lacedaemonius and another Eleius. These were the children whom a woman of Cleitor bore him, as Stesimbrotus tells us, and for this reason Pericles often reproached them with their descent on their mother's side. However, Diodorus the Topographer maintains that these two, as well as Cimon's third son, Thessalus, were born to Isodice, the daughter of Euryptolemus, and grand-daughter of Megacles. The Spartans on their side did much to strengthen Cimon's position, as they soon became bitterly hostile to Themistocles and were therefore concerned that Cimon, young as he was, should exercise greater power and influence at Athens. At first the Athenians were well pleased at this, since the goodwill the Spartans showed them was very much to their advantage. So in the early days of their empire, and while they were still engaged in building alliances, they welcomed the honours and favours that were shown to Cimon, since it was through him, in fact, that most of their negotiations with other Greek states were carried on, for the reason that he treated the allies with consideration and enjoyed a privileged position with the Spartans. But afterwards, when their power had grown and they saw that Cimon was wholeheartedly attached to the Spartans, they resented this, not least because of his tendency to sing the praises of Sparta to the Athenians whenever he had occasion to reproach them or spur them on. At these moments, so Stesimbrotus tells us, he would say: 'But that is not what the Spartans would do.' This habit alone created a great deal of jealousy and dislike of him among the Athenians, but the most serious of the charges brought against him arose as follows.

In the fourth year[1] of the reign of King Archidamus, the son of Zeuxidamus, at Sparta, the country suffered the most terrible earthquake in all its history. The earth opened in many places, several of the peaks of Mt Taygetus were torn away and the whole city of Sparta was destroyed, with the exception of five houses. It is said that while the young men and boys were at exercise inside the colonnade a few moments before the earthquake began, a hare suddenly appeared, and the boys, still naked, and covered with oil, dashed out to chase it,

1. 464 B.C.

while the young men remained behind and were all killed when the gymnasium collapsed on them. Their tomb is called Seismatias to this day, that is the tomb of those who perished in the earthquake.

Archidamus at once understood that the immediate disaster harboured yet another for the state. He saw the citizens trying to rescue their most valuable belongings from their houses and ordered the trumpet to be sounded as though an enemy were about to attack, so as to make every Spartan seize his arms and rally round the king in the shortest possible time. It was this action alone which saved Sparta at that crisis, for the Helots[1] quickly gathered from the surrounding country to fall on the surviving Spartans. When they found them armed and ready to fight, they withdrew to the cities, waged open war and persuaded many of the Perioeci to do the same. The Messenians also joined them in attacking the Spartans.

In this situation the Spartans sent Periclеidas to Athens to ask for help. This is the man whom Aristophanes makes fun of in *Lysistrata*, where he shows him sitting by the altars, with a white face and a red cloak, begging for an army.[2] Ephialtes opposed the request and exhorted the Athenians not to attempt to rescue or restore a city which was their rival but rather to let Sparta's pride be trampled underfoot. Cimon, on the other hand, put Sparta's interests before his own country's aggrandisement and persuaded the Athenians to send a large force of hoplites to her aid. Ion actually records the phrase used by Cimon which did most to sway the people: he appealed to them 'not to allow Greece to go lame, or their own city to be deprived of its yoke-fellow'.

17. After helping the Spartans, Cimon was on his way back with his army and was passing through the Isthmus of Corinth, when Lachartus accused him of leading his troops into Corinthian territory before he had asked the people's permission. 'People who knock at doors,'

1. The Helots were probably descended from the aboriginal inhabitants of Laconia, who had been reduced to the status of serfs by the Achaeans before the Dorian conquest. In the Spartan state they were not only tillers of the soil, but were called upon to provide light-armed troops and oarsmen for the fleet. The Perioeci were an intermediate class between the Helots and the Spartans. They enjoyed a measure of communal independence, but could not intermarry with the Spartans and were debarred from holding any office of state and from membership of the assembly.

2. *Lysistrata*, 1137 ff.

he said, 'do not go in before the owner invites them.' Cimon retorted: 'We did not hear you Corinthians so much as *knock* at the gates of Cleonae or Megara: you simply broke them down and pushed your way in by force of arms, on the principle that everything must be thrown open to the stronger.' After this timely show of spirit towards the Corinthians, he passed on his way with his army.

Soon afterwards the Spartans again appealed to Athens to help them against the Messenians and the Helots at Ithome. The Athenians once more came to their support, but their boldness and enterprise frightened the Spartans, who singled them out from among all the allies as dangerous revolutionaries and sent them away. They returned home in a fury and proceeded to take public revenge upon the friends of Sparta in general and Cimon in particular. They seized upon some trifling pretext to ostracize him and condemned him to exile for ten years,[1] which is the period laid down for all those who are banished by ostracism.

During this period, the Spartans, after liberating the people of Delphi from the Phocians, encamped at Tanagra on their way home and there the Athenians marched out to meet them in a pitched battle. Cimon arrived fully armed to join his own tribe of Oeneis and was anxious to play his part with his fellow citizens in resisting the Spartans. But when the Council of Five Hundred heard of this, they took fright: Cimon's enemies made out that his object was to create confusion in the army and then lead the Spartans against the city, and so the Council ordered the generals not to receive him. Cimon had to depart, but not before he had impressed upon Euthippus of Anaphlystus and his other friends, who were especially under suspicion for their pro-Spartan sympathies, that they must fight bravely and disprove by their own actions the charges that had been made against them. His friends then took his armour and set it up in the midst of their ranks. They grouped themselves into a single company, fought with desperate courage and were finally killed to the last man, 100 of them all told. The Athenians bitterly lamented their loss and were plunged into remorse for having so unjustly accused them. For this reason the people's resentment against Cimon quickly died down, partly because, as was natural, they remembered his services to them, and partly because the turn of events now moved in his favour. The Athenians had

1. 461 B.C.

suffered a major defeat at Tanagra and as they fully expected to be invaded by a Peloponnesian army the following spring, they recalled Cimon from exile and the decree providing for his return was actually moved by Pericles. This only goes to show how far in those days the differences between party leaders were a matter of political opinion: their private feelings were kept under control and could easily be set aside in the public interest, while even ambition, the most powerful of all human passions, was subordinated to the country's welfare.

18. At any rate, as soon as Cimon returned from exile,[1] he put an end to the war and arranged a settlement between the two cities. However, once peace had been established, it soon became clear to him that the Athenians were incapable of settling down quietly but were bent on a policy of constant activity and expansion of their empire through foreign expeditions. As he was anxious not to provoke the other Greek states or, by cruising with a large fleet around the islands or the Peloponnese, to incur the charge of starting a war, he had 200 triremes manned, with the object of making another expedition against Egypt and Cyprus. His plan was to keep the Athenians in constant training through their operations against the barbarians, and to allow them to profit as they deserved from the wealth they took from their natural enemies and brought into Greece.

But when everything was ready and the troops on the point of embarking, Cimon had a dream, in which an angry bitch was baying at him and in the midst of its baying, it spoke in human tones and said:

Go your way: I shall find you a friend both to me and my puppies.

This was a difficult vision to interpret, but Astyphilus of Poseidonia, who possessed prophetic powers and was a close friend of Cimon's, declared to him that it foretold his death and analysed it as follows. A dog is the enemy of the man it barks at; and one can do an enemy no greater service than to die. The blending of animal and

1. The statement that he was recalled in the year of the battle of Tanagra 457 B.C.) raises many difficulties. After this date there is no other record of Cimon's activities until the expedition against the Persians undertaken in 450 B.C., and described in Ch. 18. Unless he was in exile it is hard to account for his absence from the 'active list' of Athenian generals during these years. The ten years' exile imposed by his ostracism would have expired in 451 B.C.

human speech signifies that the enemy is the Mede, since their army is composed partly of Greeks and partly of barbarians. After this vision Cimon offered a sacrifice to Dionysus, and as the seer was cutting up the victim, swarms of ants seized upon the blood as it congealed. They carried it little by little over to Cimon and proceeded to cover his big toe with it for some time before he noticed them. Then just as he saw what they were doing, the priest came up and showed him that the victim's liver was without that part known as the head.

However, there could be no withdrawing from the expedition, so he set sail and after detaching a squadron of sixty ships to proceed to Egypt, he made for Cyprus with the remainder. He defeated the king's fleet of Phoenician and Cilician ships in a sea battle and won over the cities in the neighbourhood. Then he waited for his opportunity to attack the cities of Egypt, for he had in mind nothing less than the complete destruction of Persia's supremacy, and he was all the more resolved upon this because of the knowledge that Themistocles had built up a position of great power and prestige among the Persians, and had promised the king that if a war were launched against Greece, he himself would take command. At any rate it is said that one of the principal reasons which made Themistocles take his own life was his despair of fulfilling his undertakings against the Greeks, and the knowledge that he would never be able to rival Cimon's military genius and good fortune.

Cimon, on the other hand, while he was waiting with his fleet off Cyprus and turning over in his mind these vast schemes of conquest, sent a delegation to the shrine of Jupiter Ammon to put a secret question to the oracle there. What this was no one has ever discovered, nor did the god make any response: instead, as soon as they approached, the oracle commanded them to depart and said that Cimon himself was already with him. When they heard this, the messengers returned to the sea and no sooner had they arrived at the Greek camp, which was then on the Egyptian coast, than they learned that Cimon was dead. When they counted back the days to the moment when the oracle had replied to them, they understood that it had been alluding to the general's death, since he was already with the gods.

19. According to most accounts,[1] Cimon died of sickness while he

1. Thucydides, i, 112.

was besieging Citium, but others say that it was from a wound he received in a battle against the Persians. As he was dying, he ordered his companions to sail away at once and keep his death a secret. In this way it was contrived that neither the allies nor the enemy knew what had happened and the expedition was brought back safely 'through Cimon's generalship', as Phanodemus puts it, although he had in fact been dead for thirty days.

After his death no Greek general was to win another brilliant success against the barbarians. Instead, a succession of demagogues and warmongers arose, who proceeded to turn the Greek states against one another, and nobody could be found to separate or reconcile them before they met in the headlong collision of war. In this way the Persians gained a breathing-space, but the power of Greece was incalculably weakened. It was not until several generations afterwards that Agesilaus carried the Greek arms into Asia and fought a brief campaign against the king's generals along the Ionian coast.[1] Yet even he achieved nothing of great consequence before he was overwhelmed in his turn by a flood of dissensions and disturbances within Greece and a second empire was swept from his grasp. In the end he had to return, leaving the tax-gatherers of the Persian empire still collecting tribute among the allied and friendly cities, whereas before not one of these functionaries, nor even so much as a Persian horse, was to be seen within fifty miles of the sea, so long as Cimon was general.

His remains were brought home to Athens, as is proved by the monuments which are called after him to this day. But the people of Citium also pay homage to a so-called tomb of Cimon. Nausicrates the rhetorician tells us that once, during a period of plague and famine, the god charged them not to forget Cimon, but to revere and honour him as a superior being. Such was the nature of this Greek commander.

1. 396–394 B.C.

6

PERICLES[1]

[c. 495 – 429 B.C.]

* *
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THE emperor Augustus once caught sight of some wealthy foreigners in Rome, who were carrying about young monkeys and puppies in their arms and caressing them with a great show of affection. We are told that he then asked whether the women in those countries did not bear children, thus rebuking in truly imperial fashion those who squander upon animals that capacity for love and affection which in the natural order of things should be reserved for our fellow men. In the same way, since nature has endowed us with a lively curiosity and love of knowledge, we ought equally to blame the people who abuse these gifts and divert them to objects which are unworthy of attention, while they neglect those which have the best claim to it. It is true, of course, that our outward sense cannot avoid apprehending the various objects it encounters, merely by virtue of their impact and regardless of whether they are useful or not: but a man's conscious intellect is something which he may bring to bear or avert as he chooses, and he can very easily transfer it to another object if he sees fit. For this reason we ought to seek out virtue not merely to contemplate it, but to derive benefit from doing so. A colour, for example, is well suited to the eye if its bright and agreeable tones stimulate and refresh the vision, and in the same way we ought to apply our intellectual vision to those models which can inspire it to attain its own proper virtue through the sense of delight they arouse.

We find these examples in the actions of good men, which implant an eager rivalry and a keen desire to imitate them in the minds of

1. Chapters 1 and 2 form the introduction to the tenth book of the *Lives*, which is the first book in the second series. This consists of lives selected as examples of public virtues.

those who have sought them out, whereas our admiration for other forms of action does not immediately prompt us to do the same ourselves. On the contrary, it is quite possible for us to take pleasure in the work and at the same time look down on the workman. In the case of perfumes or dyes, for example, we are delighted by the product, but regard perfumers and dyers as uncouth persons who follow a mean occupation. The same idea was well expressed by Antisthenes, when he was told that Ismenius was an excellent oboe-player, and retorted: 'Then he must be good for nothing else, otherwise he would never play the oboe so well!' We are told, too, that King Philip of Macedon, when his son was playing the harp delightfully and with great virtuosity at a drinking-party, asked him: 'Are you not ashamed to play as well as that?' For a king it is surely enough if he can find time to hear others play, and he pays great honour to the Muses if he does no more than attend such contests as a spectator.

2. On the other hand a man who occupies himself with servile tasks proves by the very pains which he devotes to them that he is indifferent to higher things. No young man of good breeding and high ideals feels that he must be a Pheidias or a Polycleitus after seeing the statue of Zeus at Olympia or Hera at Argos,[1] nor does he aspire to be an Anacreon or a Philetas or an Archilochus, because of the pleasure he derives from their poems, for it does not necessarily follow that because a particular work succeeds in charming us its creator also deserves our admiration. We may say, then, that achievements of this kind, which do not arouse the spirit of emulation or create any passionate desire to imitate them, are of no great benefit to the spectator. On the other hand virtue in action immediately takes such hold of a man that he no sooner admires a deed than he sets out to follow in the steps of the doer. Fortune we prize for the good things we may possess and enjoy from her, but virtue for the good deeds we can perform: the former we are content to receive at the hands of others, but the latter we desire others to experience from ourselves. Moral good, in a word, has a power to attract towards itself. It is no sooner seen than it rouses the spectator to action, and yet it does not form his character by mere imitation, but by promoting the understanding of virtuous deeds it provides him with a dominating purpose.

These, then, are the reasons which have impelled me to persevere

1. Both works were gigantic statues in ivory and gold.

in my biographical writings, and I have therefore devoted this tenth book to the lives of Pericles and of Fabius Maximus, who waged such a long war with Hannibal. The two men possessed many virtues in common, but above all through their moderation, their uprightness, and their ability to endure the follies of their peoples and their colleagues in office, they rendered the very greatest service to their countries. Whether my judgement is accurate, the reader must decide from what is written here.

3. Pericles belonged to the tribe of Acamantis and the deme of Cholargus, and he was descended on both sides from the noblest lineage in Athens. His father was Xanthippus, who defeated the Persian generals at Mycale.[1] His mother, Agariste, was the niece of that Cleisthenes who not only performed the noble exploit of driving out the Pisistratids and destroying their tyranny, but went on to establish laws and a constitution that was admirably balanced so as to promote harmony between the citizens and security for the whole state. Agariste once had a dream that she had given birth to a lion, and a few days later she was delivered of Pericles. His physical features were almost perfect, the only exception being his head, which was rather long and out of proportion. For this reason almost all his portraits show him wearing a helmet, since the artists apparently did not wish to taunt him with this deformity. However, the comic poets of Athens nicknamed him '*schinocephalus*' or 'squill-head', and Cratinus,[2] for example, in his play *The Tutors* says that 'Old Cronos mated with the goddess of party-strife, and their offspring was the biggest tyrant of all: now the gods call him "The Head-Compeller".' And again in his *Nemesis* he refers to 'Zeus, the protector of foreigners and heads'. Telecleides describes Pericles as sitting on the Acropolis at his wits' end, 'at one moment top-heavy with the load of the cares of state, and at another creating all the din of war by himself, from that brain-pan of his, which is big enough to hold eleven couches.' And Eupolis in

1. 479 B.C., traditionally on the same day as the battle of Plataea.

2. Cratinus and the other comic poets mentioned here tended to be conservative in their sympathies. Cimon was their ideal, and foreign cults and influences, the sophists, and the higher philosophy were their favourite butts. Pericles, like Zeus, is the offspring of (party) strife: 'head-compeller' parodies the Homeric epithet of Zeus, 'cloud-compeller', and 'protector of foreigners' may refer to Pericles' law affecting children of mixed parentage, which he had altered in his own favour (Ch. 37).

The Demes[1] asks questions about each of the great popular leaders as they come up from Hades, and remarks, when Pericles' name is called out last:

> Now you have brought us up the very head
> Of those in the world below.

4. His teacher in music,[2] most writers agree, was Damon (whose name should be pronounced with the first syllable short), although according to Aristotle[3] he had a thorough musical training at the hands of Pythocleides. This Damon appears to have been a sophist of the highest order, who used his musical teaching as a screen to conceal his real talents from the world in general; in fact it was he who trained Pericles for his political contests, much as a masseur or trainer prepares an athlete. However, Damon's lyre did not succeed in imposing upon the Athenians, and he was banished by ostracism on the grounds of being a great intriguer and supporter of tyranny, and he also became a target for the comic poets. At any rate Plato, the comic dramatist, makes one of his characters speak these lines to him

> First of all answer my question, I beg you,
> For you are the Chiron,[4] they say, who tutored Pericles.

Pericles also studied under Zeno the Eleatic at the period when, like Parmenides, he was lecturing on natural philosophy. Zeno[5] had perfected a technique of cross-examination which enabled him to corner his opponent by the method of question and answer, and Timon of Phlius has described him as

Zeno, assailer of all things, whose tongue like a double-edged weapon
Argued on either side with an irresistible fury.

But there was one man more closely associated with Pericles than any other, who did most to clothe him with a majestic bearing that was more potent than any demagogue's appeal, and who helped to

1. A play which showed the great leaders of the past, Miltiades, Themistocles, Aristides, and Pericles, brought back to life to witness how degenerate their democratic successors had become.

2. The word is used here in the wider Greek sense which includes poetry and other subjects.

3. Actually Plato, *Alcibiades*, I, 118c.

4. The allusion is to Chiron the Centaur, tutor of Achilles.

5. Zeno of Elea, a pupil of Parmenides, was the inventor of dialectic and author of various famous paradoxes, such as that of Achilles and the tortoise.

develop the natural dignity of his character to the highest degree. This was Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, whom the men of his time used to call Intelligence personified. They gave him this name either out of admiration for the extraordinary intellectual powers he displayed in the investigation of natural phenomena, or else because he was the first to dethrone Chance and Necessity and set up pure Intelligence in their place as the principle of law and order which informs the universe, and which distinguishes from an otherwise chaotic mass those substances which possess elements in common.

5. Pericles had an unbounded admiration for Anaxagoras, and his mind became steeped in the so-called higher philosophy and abstract speculation. From it he derived not only a dignity of spirit and a nobility of utterance which was entirely free from the vulgar and unscrupulous buffooneries of mob-oratory, but also a composure of countenance that never dissolved into laughter, a serenity in his movements and in the graceful arrangement of his dress which nothing could disturb while he was speaking, a firm and evenly modulated voice, and other characteristics of the same kind which deeply impressed his audience. It is a fact, at any rate, that once in the marketplace, where he had urgent business to transact, he allowed himself to be abused and reviled for an entire day by some idle hooligan without uttering a word in reply. Towards evening he returned home unperturbed, while the man followed close behind, still heaping every kind of insult upon him. When Pericles was about to go indoors, as it was now dark, he ordered one of his servants to take a torch and escort the man all the way to his own house.

The poet Ion,[1] however, says that Pericles had a rather disdainful and arrogant manner of address, and that his pride had in it a good deal of superciliousness and contempt for others. By contrast, he praises the ease, good humour, and polished manner which Cimon showed in his dealings with the world. But we need not pay much attention to Ion, who apparently expects that virtue, like a complete dramatic tetralogy, must include an element of low comedy. Against this, Zeno used to urge all those who derided Pericles' austere manner as nothing more than pride and a craving for popularity to go and

1. Ion (484–424 B.C.) was one of the five Athenian tragic poets of the canon and also wrote on historical and philosophical subjects. Born in Chios, he admired Cimon and was therefore less well disposed towards Pericles.

affect something like it themselves; his idea was that the mere imitation of these noble qualities might, after a time, cause them to be adopted unconsciously as a habit and even admired.

6. These were not the only advantages that Pericles gained from his association with Anaxagoras. He seems also to have learned from his teaching to rise above that superstitious terror which springs from an ignorant wonder at the common phenomena of the heavens. It affects those who know nothing of the causes of such things, who fear the gods to the point of madness and are easily confused through their lack of experience. A knowledge of natural causes, on the other hand, banishes these fears and replaces morbid superstition with a piety which rests on a sure foundation supported by rational hopes.

There is a story that Pericles was once sent from his country estate the head of a one-horned ram. Thereupon Lampon,[1] the soothsayer, when he saw how the horn grew strong and solid out of the middle of the creature's forehead, declared that the mastery of the two dominant parties in the city – which at that time were led by Thucydides and Pericles respectively – would be concentrated in the hands of one man, and that he would be the one to whom this sign had been given. Anaxagoras, on the other hand, had the skull dissected and proceeded to demonstrate that the brain had not filled its natural space, but had contracted into a point like an egg at that place in the cavity from which the horn grew. On that occasion, so the story goes, it was Anaxagoras who won the admiration of the onlookers, but not long after Lampon came into his own, for Thucydides was overthrown and the entire control of affairs fell into Pericles' hands.

In my opinion, however, there was nothing to prevent both the scientist and the prophet from being right, since the one correctly diagnosed the cause and the other the meaning of the prodigy. It was the business of the first to observe why something happens and how it becomes what it is, and of the second to foretell the purpose of an event and its significance. Those who say that to discover the cause of a phenomenon disposes of its meaning fail to notice that the same reasoning which explains away divine portents would also dispense with the artificial symbols created by mankind. The beating of gongs,

1. A celebrated soothsayer and interpreter of oracles. Pericles appointed him founder of the colony of Thurii in Italy. He was also a byword for his hypocrisy, orthodoxy, and greed.

the blaze of beacons, and the shadows on sundials all have their particular causes, but have also been contrived to signify something else. However, this is perhaps a subject for a separate essay.

7. As a young man Pericles was inclined to shrink from facing the people. One reason for this was that he was considered to bear a distinct resemblance to the tyrant Pisistratus, and when men who were well on in years remarked on the charm of Pericles' voice and the smoothness and fluency of his speech, they were astonished at the resemblance between the two. The fact that he was rich and that he came of a distinguished family and possessed exceedingly powerful friends made the fear of ostracism very real to him, and at the beginning of his career he took no part in politics but devoted himself to soldiering, in which he showed great daring and enterprise. However, the time came when Aristides was dead, Themistocles in exile, and Cimon frequently absent on distant campaigns. Then at last Pericles decided to attach himself to the people's party and to take up the cause of the poor and the many instead of that of the rich and the few, in spite of the fact that this was quite contrary to his own temperament, which was thoroughly aristocratic. He was afraid, apparently, of being suspected of aiming at a dictatorship; so when he saw that Cimon's sympathies were strongly with the nobles and that he was the idol of the aristocratic party, he began to ingratiate himself with the people, partly for self-preservation and partly by way of securing power against his rival.

He now entered upon a new mode of life. He was never to be seen walking in any street except the one which led to the market-place and the Council-chamber. He refused not only invitations to dinner but every kind of friendly or familiar intercourse, so that through all the years of his political career, he never visited one of his friends to dine. The only exception was an occasion when his great-uncle Euryptolemus gave a wedding-feast. Pericles sat at table until the libations[1] were poured at the end of the meal, and then at once rose and took his leave. Convivial occasions have a way of breaking down the most majestic demeanour, and in familiar relationships it is hard to keep up an imposing exterior which is assumed for appearances' sake. On the other hand, genuine virtue can only be more impressive

1. After these, the wine for the symposium was brought in and the evening's drinking began.

the more it is seen, and the daily life of a really good man is never so much admired by the outside world as it is by his intimate friends.

Pericles, however, took care not to make himself too familiar a figure, even to the people, and he only addressed them at long intervals. He did not choose to speak on every question, but reserved himself, as Critolaus says, like the state galley, the *Salamina*, for great occasions, and allowed his friends and other public speakers to deal with less important matters. One of these, they say, was Ephialtes, who destroyed the power of the Council of the Areopagus and in this way, as Plato the philosopher puts it,[1] poured out neat a full draught of freedom for the people and made them unmanageable, so that they 'nibbled at Euboea and trampled on the islands, like a horse which can no longer bear to obey the rein.'

8. Pericles wished to equip himself with a style of speaking which, like a musical accomplishment, should harmonize perfectly with his mode of life and the grandeur of his ideals, and he often made use of the instrument which Anaxagoras had put into his hand and tinged his oratory, as it were, with natural philosophy. It was from this philosophy that he had acquired, in addition to his natural gifts, what the divine Plato calls 'the loftiness of thought and the power to create an ideally perfect work',[2] and by applying this training to the art of oratory he far excelled all other speakers. This was the reason, some people say, for his being nicknamed the Olympian, though others believe that it was on account of the buildings with which he adorned Athens, and others again because of his prowess as a statesman and a general; but it may well have been the combination of many qualities which earned him the name. However, the comic poets of the time, who were constantly letting fly at him either in earnest or in fun, declare that the title originated mainly from his manner of speaking. They refer to him as thundering and lightning when he addressed his audience and as wielding a terrible thunderbolt in his tongue. A saying of Thucydides,[3] the son of Melesias, has come down to us, which was uttered in jest, but which bears witness to Pericles' powers

1. *Republic*, viii, 562c.
2. *Phaedrus*, 270a.
3. The leader of the aristocratic party (to be distinguished from the historian) had taken refuge in Sparta after his ostracism in 442 B.C. (Ch. 14). Archidamus II, king of Sparta (469–427 B.C.), commanded the first two Peloponnesian invasions of Attica after the outbreak of war.

of persuasion. Thucydides belonged to the aristocratic party and was a political opponent of Pericles for many years. When Archidamus, the king of Sparta, asked him whether he or Pericles was the better wrestler, Thucydides replied: 'Whenever I throw him at wrestling, he beats me by arguing that he was never down, and he can even make the spectators believe it.'

The truth is, however, that even Pericles was extremely cautious in his use of words, so much so that whenever he rose to speak, he uttered a prayer that no word might escape his lips which was unsuited to the matter in hand. He left nothing behind him in writing except for the decrees he proposed, and only a very few of his sayings have been handed down. One of these was his appeal to the Athenians to remove 'that eyesore of the Piraeus', as he called Aegina, and another his remark that he could already see 'war bearing down upon them from the Peloponnese'. On another occasion when Sophocles, who was serving with him on the expedition to Samos,[1] began to praise the looks of a handsome boy, Pericles remarked that a general has to keep his eyes clean, too, and not merely his hands. Stesimbrotus also records that in his funeral oration for those who had fallen in the war against Samos, Pericles declared that these men had become immortal like the gods: 'for we cannot see the gods', he said, 'but we believe them to be immortal from the honours we pay them and the blessings we receive from them, and so it is with those who have given their lives for their country.'

9. Thucydides[2] characterizes Pericles' administration as having been distinctly aristocratic – 'democracy in name, but in practice government by the first citizen'. But many other writers maintain that it was he who first led on the people into passing such measures as the allotment[3] to Athenians of lands belonging to subject peoples, or the granting of allowances[4] for the public festivals and fees[5] for various public services, and that because of his policy they fell into bad habits and

1. 440 B.C.

2. The historian, in his encomium on Pericles, ii, 65.

3. This system of granting the land of subject peoples to Athenian citizens, who still remained citizens of Athens and paid no tribute, differed from the practice of other Greek states and was particularly resented by the allies.

4. The two obol grant which admitted Athenian citizens to the theatre.

5. The payment of jurymen, at first at two obols a day, was introduced by Pericles, and the fee was increased to three obols by Cleon about 425 B.C.

became extravagant and undisciplined instead of frugal and self-sufficient as they had once been. Let us consider in the light of the facts what may account for this change in his policy.[1]

At the beginning of his career, as we have seen, Pericles had to measure himself against Cimon's reputation, and he therefore set out to win the favour of the people. He could not compete with the wealth or the property by means of which Cimon captured the affections of the poor; for the latter supplied a free dinner every day to any Athenian who needed it, provided clothes for the old, and took down the fences on his estates so that anyone who wished could pick the fruit. So finding himself outmatched in this kind of popular appeal, Pericles turned his attention to the distribution of the public wealth. He did this on the advice of Damonides of the deme of Oa, as Aristotle tells us;[2] and before long, what with the allowances for public festivals, fees for jury service, and other grants and gratuities, he succeeded in bribing the masses wholesale and enlisting their support in his attack on the Council of the Areopagus. Pericles was not himself a member of this body, since he had never been appointed by lot to the post either of chief archon or archon thesmothete or king archon or polemarch. These positions had traditionally been filled by lot, and it was only through them that men who had acquitted themselves well in office could rise to membership of the Areopagus. Because he had thus been excluded, Pericles, once he had gathered popular support, exerted himself all the more to lead his party in a campaign against the Areopagus, and he succeeded so well that not only was it deprived of most of its judicial powers through a bill brought forward by Ephialtes, but Cimon himself was ostracized[3] on the charge of being a friend of Sparta and an enemy of the people's interests. Yet this was a man who was second to none in Athens in birth or in wealth, who had won the most brilliant victories over the Persians and filled the city with money and treasure, as has been recorded in his Life. Such was the strength of Pericles' hold over the people.

10. Now ostracism was limited by law to a period of ten years. In the meantime,[4] however, the Spartans invaded the district of Tanagra

1. See Ch. 15 for a further discussion of Pericles' shift to a more statesmanlike approach to political problems once he had attained power.

2. *Constitution of Athens*, xxvii. 4.

3. 461 B.C.

4. 457 B.C.

with a large army and the Athenians at once marched out to meet them. Accordingly Cimon returned from exile,[1] took up arms and placed himself in the line of battle by the side of the men of his tribe, determined to clear himself of his supposed pro-Spartan sympathies by his actions and by sharing the dangers of his fellow countrymen. However, Pericles' friends combined to drive Cimon away from the ranks on the ground that he was still an exile. For that reason it is believed that Pericles fought in this battle with greater courage than ever before and surpassed everyone in exposing himself to danger. In this action, too, Cimon's friends, whom Pericles had accused along with him of pro-Spartan leanings, were all killed to a man. So the Athenians, now that they had lost a great battle on the frontiers of Attica and expected that the Spartans would press them hard in the coming summer, were plunged into remorse for their treatment of Cimon and longed to bring him back. As soon as Pericles understood this, he did not hesitate to grant the people their wish and himself proposed the decree to recall his opponent. Thereupon, Cimon returned from exile and negotiated a peace between the two cities, for the Spartans were as well disposed towards him as they were hostile to Pericles and the other democratic leaders.

Some writers maintain, however, that Pericles did not propose the decree for Cimon's recall until a secret agreement had been reached between them with the help of Elpinice, Cimon's sister. The terms of this, they say, were that Cimon should sail with an expedition of 200 ships to attempt to reduce the territory of the king of Persia and should take command abroad, while Pericles should have supreme authority at home. It is also believed that when, several years before this, Cimon was being tried for his life[2] on a charge of treason, and Pericles had been chosen as one of the ten public prosecutors, Elpinice helped to soften his animosity towards her brother. The story goes that when she came and pleaded with him, Pericles told her with a smile, 'Elpinice, you are too old, much too old, for this kind of business.' However this may be, Pericles made no more than one speech, by way of formally discharging his commission, and in the end did Cimon less harm than any of his other accusers.

In the light of this, how are we to believe Idomeneus's charge that

1. See *Cimon*, Chs. 17–18 and note on the chronological difficulties of Plutarch's version of the affair.

2. 461 B.C.

Pericles arranged the assassination of the democratic leader Ephialtes, who was his friend, as well as his partner in his political programme, out of sheer jealousy of his reputation? This is surely a poisonous accusation, which he has concocted from some unknown source, to hurl at a man who may not have been in every respect above reproach, but who possessed a noble disposition and a spirit so dedicated to the pursuit of honour that there was no room in it for such brutal or savage passions. As for Ephialtes, the truth is that the aristocrats had good reason to fear him, since he was relentless in calling to account and prosecuting those who had in any way harmed the people, and so his enemies conspired against him and secretly arranged for him to be murdered by Aristodicus of Tanagra, according to Aristotle.[1] Cimon's death took place later during his campaign in Cyprus.[2]

11. The aristocratic party had already recognized for some time that Pericles was now the most important man in Athens and that he wielded far more power than any other citizen. But they were anxious that there should be someone in the city capable of standing up to him so as to blunt the edge of his authority and prevent it from becoming an outright monarchy. They therefore put forward Thucydides, of Alopece, a man of good sense and a relative of Cimon, to lead the opposition. He was less of a soldier than Cimon, but better versed in forensic business and an abler politician, and by watching his opportunities at home and engaging Pericles in debate, he soon succeeded in creating a balance of power in Athenian affairs. He did not allow the aristocrats, the so-called party of the good and true, to become dispersed among the mass of the people in the Assembly, as they had done in the past, with the result that their influence had been swamped by sheer numbers. Instead, by separating and grouping them in a single body, he was able to concentrate their strength and make it an effective counterweight in the scale. Below the surface of affairs in Athens, there had existed from the very beginning a kind of flaw or seam, such as one finds in a piece of iron, which gave a hint of the rift that divided the aims of the popular and the aristocratic parties: but now these two men's rival ambitions and their struggle for power sharply widened this cleavage and caused the one side to be named the party of the many and the other of the few. Pericles therefore chose

1. *Constitution of Athens*, XXV, 4.
2. 449 B.C.

this moment to hand over the reins of power to the people to a greater extent than ever before and deliberately shaped his policy to please them. He constantly provided public pageants, banquets, and processions in the city, entertaining the people like children with elegant pleasures; and he sent out sixty triremes to cruise every year, in which many of the citizens served with pay for eight months and learned and practised seamanship at the same time. Besides this, he dispatched 1,000 settlers to the Chersonese,[1] 500 to Naxos, 250 to Andros, 1,000 to Thrace to make their homes with the Bisaltae, and others to the new colony named Thurii, which was founded in Italy near the site of Sybaris. In this way he relieved the city of a large number of idlers and agitators, raised the standards of the poorest classes, and, by installing garrisons among the allies, implanted at the same time a healthy fear of rebellion.

12. But there was one measure above all which at once gave the greatest pleasure to the Athenians, adorned their city and created amazement among the rest of mankind, and which is today the sole testimony that the tales of the ancient power and glory of Greece are no mere fables. By this I mean his construction of temples and public buildings; and yet it was this, more than any other action of his, which his enemies slandered and misrepresented. They cried out in the Assembly that Athens had lost her good name and disgraced herself by transferring from Delos into her own keeping the funds that had been contributed by the rest of Greece, and that now the most plausible excuse for this action, namely, that the money had been removed for fear of the barbarians and was being guarded in a safe place, had been demolished by Pericles himself. 'The Greeks must be outraged,' they cried. 'They must consider this an act of bare-faced tyranny, when they see that with their own contributions, extorted from them by force for the war against the Persians, we are gilding and beautifying our city, as if it were some vain woman decking her-

1. The peninsula, which was made familiar to our century by the Gallipoli campaign, was captured by Cimon in 475 and colonized in 448–447 B.C. Naxos revolted from Athens and lost its independence in 467; it was occupied by Athenian settlers in 448. Andros was probably settled by the Athenians a few years earlier. Thurii was founded in 443 B.C. on the territory of Sybaris: this city had been defeated by Croton in 510 B.C. and the site completely razed. The new colony was built by emigrants from many Greek cities and the Athenians did not attempt to dominate it.

self out with costly stones and statues and temples worth millions of money.'

Pericles' answer[1] to the people was that the Athenians were not obliged to give the allies any account of how their money was spent, provided that they carried on the war for them and kept the Persians away. 'They do not give us a single horse, nor a soldier, nor a ship. All they supply is money,' he told the Athenians, 'and this belongs not to the people who give it, but to those who receive it, so long as they provide the services they are paid for. It is no more than fair that after Athens has been equipped with all she needs to carry on the war, she should apply the surplus to public works, which, once completed, will bring her glory for all time, and while they are being built will convert that surplus to immediate use. In this way all kinds of enterprises and demands will be created which will provide inspiration for every art, find employment for every hand, and transform the whole people into wage-earners, so that the city will decorate and maintain herself at the same time from her own resources.'

Certainly it was true that those who were of military age and physically in their prime could always earn their pay from the public funds by serving on Pericles' various campaigns. But he was also anxious that the unskilled masses, who had no military training, should not be debarred from benefiting from the national income, and yet should not be paid for sitting about and doing nothing. So he boldly laid before the people proposals for immense public works and plans for buildings, which would involve many different arts and industries and require long periods to complete, his object being that those who stayed at home, no less than those serving in the fleet or the army or on garrison duty, should be enabled to enjoy a share of the national wealth. The materials to be used were stone, bronze, ivory, gold, ebony, and cypress-wood, while the arts or trades which wrought or fashioned them were those of carpenter, modeller, coppersmith, stone-mason, dyer, worker in gold and ivory, painter, embroiderer, and engraver, and besides these the carriers and suppliers of the materials, such as merchants, sailors, and pilots for the sea-borne

1. The Athenian case was that their protection kept off the Persians and kept down the pirates. What the allies resented was not only the high cost of these services in tribute, but also the political control exercised from Athens. It was only the larger islands, Chios, Mitylene, and Samos, which possessed their own oligarchies. The allies were also subject to Athenian courts.

traffic, and waggon-makers, trainers of draught animals, and drivers for everything that came by land. There were also rope-makers, weavers, leatherworkers, roadbuilders and miners. Each individual craft, like a general with an army under his separate command, had its own corps of unskilled labourers at its disposal, and these worked in a subordinate capacity, as an instrument obeys the hand, or the body the soul, and so through these various demands the city's prosperity was extended far and wide and shared among every age and condition in Athens.

13. So the buildings arose, as imposing in their sheer size as they were inimitable in the grace of their outlines, since the artists strove to excel themselves in the beauty of their workmanship. And yet the most wonderful thing about them was the speed with which they were completed. Each of them, men supposed, would take many generations to build, but in fact the entire project was carried through in the high summer of one man's administration. On the other hand we are told that when Zeuxis the painter once heard Agatharchus boasting about how swiftly and easily he painted his figures, his retort was, 'Mine take, and last, a long time.' Certainly mere dexterity and speed of execution seldom give a lasting value to a work of art or bestow a delicate beauty upon it. It is the time laid out in laborious creation which repays us later through the enduring strength it confers. It is this, above all, which makes Pericles' works an object of wonder to us – the fact that they were created in so short a span, and yet for all time. Each one possessed a beauty which seemed venerable the moment it was born, and at the same time a youthful vigour which makes them appear to this day as if they were newly built. A bloom of eternal freshness hovers over these works of his and preserves them from the touch of time, as if some unfading spirit of youth, some ageless vitality had been breathed into them.

The director and supervisor of the whole enterprise was Pheidias, although there were various great architects and artists employed on the individual buildings. For example, Callicrates and Ictinus were the architects of the Parthenon with its cella 100 feet long; it was Coroebus who started to build the temple of initiation at Eleusis, but he only lived to see the columns erected on the lower story and the architraves placed on the capitals. After his death, Metagenes of Xypete added the frieze and the upper colonnade, and Xenocles of the

deme of Cholargus crowned it with the lantern over the shrine. Callicrates was the contractor for the third Long Wall,[1] which ran between the original two, and for which Socrates says[2] that he himself heard Pericles propose the decree to the people. Cratinus makes fun of the slow progress of the work, saying

> Pericles had built this wall long ago, if words could do it;
> In fact, not one inch has been added to it.

The Odeon, with its interior arranged to accommodate many rows of seats and supporting columns, and its circular roof sloping down from its apex, was said to be an exact reproduction of the king of Persia's pavilion, and this was also built under Pericles' direction. For this reason Cratinus has another joke at his expense in *The Thracian Women:*

> As Zeus an onion on his head he wears,
> As Pericles a whole orchestra bears;
> Afraid of broils and banishment no more,
> He tunes the shell he trembled at before.

At the same time, still in pursuit of distinction, Pericles had a decree passed to establish a musical contest as part of the Panathenaic festival. He himself was elected one of the stewards and laid down rules as to how the competitors should sing or play the flute or the lyre. At that time and from thenceforward the audience came to the Odeon to hear these musical contests.

The Propylaea, or portals of the Acropolis, of which Mnesicles was the architect, were finished in the space of five years. While they were being built, a miraculous incident took place, which suggested that the goddess Athena herself, so far from standing aloof, was taking a hand and helping to complete the work. One of the workmen, the most active and energetic among them, slipped and fell from a great height. He lay for some time severely injured, and the doctors could hold out no hope that he would recover. Pericles was greatly distressed at this, but the goddess appeared to him in a dream and ordered a course of treatment, which he applied, with the result that the man was easily and quickly healed. It was to commemorate this that

1. The two original Long Walls had been built a considerable distance apart. If an enemy attack broke through either, communications with the Piraeus would have been interrupted, so Pericles built a third, which ran parallel to the western wall and some two hundred yards inside it.

2. Plato, *Gorgias*, 455e.

Pericles set up the bronze statue of Athena the Healer near the altar dedicated to that goddess, which they say was there before.

But it was Pheidias who directed the making of the great golden statue of Athena, and his name is duly inscribed upon the marble tablet on the Acropolis as its creator. Almost the whole enterprise was in his hands, and because of his friendship with Pericles all the artists and craftsmen, as I have said, came under his orders. The result was that he himself became the victim of envy and his patron of slander, for the rumour was put about that Pheidias arranged intrigues for Pericles with free-born Athenian women, when they came on the pretext of looking at the works of art. The comic poets took up this story and showered Pericles with all the innuendoes they could invent, coupling his name with the wife of Menippus, a man who was his friend and had served as his second in command in the army. Even Pyrilampus's fondness for keeping birds was dragged in, and because he was a friend of Pericles, he was accused of using his peacocks as presents for the women who granted Pericles their favours. The fact is that men who know nothing of decency in their own lives are only too ready to launch foul slanders against their betters and to offer them up as victims to the evil deity of popular envy. And, indeed, we can hardly be surprised at this, when we find that even Stesimbrotus of Thasos has dared to give currency to the shocking and completely unfounded charge that Pericles seduced his son's wife. This only goes to show how thickly the truth is hedged around with obstacles and how hard it is to track down by historical research. Writers who live after the events they describe find that their view of them is obscured by the lapse of time, while those who investigate the deeds and lives of their contemporaries are equally apt to corrupt and distort the truth, in some cases because of envy or private hatred, in others through the desire to flatter or show favour.

14. Thucydides and the other members of his party were constantly denouncing Pericles for squandering public money and letting the national revenue run to waste, and so Pericles appealed to the people in the Assembly to declare whether in their opinion he had spent too much. 'Far too much,' was their reply, whereupon Pericles retorted, 'Very well then, do not let it be charged to the public account but to my own, and I will dedicate all the public buildings in my name.' It may have been that the people admired such a gesture in the grand

manner, or else that they were just as ambitious as Pericles to have a share in the glory of his works. At any rate they raised an uproar and told him to draw freely on the public funds and spare no expense in his outlay. Finally, Pericles ventured to put matters to the test of an ostracism, and the result was that he secured his rival's banishment[1] and the dissolution of the party which had been organized against him.

15. From this point political opposition was at an end, the parties had merged themselves into one, and the city presented a single and unbroken front. Pericles now proceeded to bring under his own control not only home affairs, but all issues in which the authority of Athens was involved: these included matters of tribute, the army, the navy, the islands, maritime affairs, the great resources which Athens derived both from the Greek states and from the barbarians, and the leadership she exercised which was buttressed by subject states, friendships with kings and alliances with dynasties. But at the same time Pericles' own conduct took on quite a different character. He was no longer so docile towards the people, nor so ready to give way to their caprices, which were as shifting and changeable as the winds. He abandoned the somewhat nerveless and indulgent leadership he had shown on occasion, which might be compared to a soft and flowery melody, and struck instead the firm, high note of an aristocratic, even regal statesmanship. And since he used his authority honestly and unswervingly in the interests of the city, he was usually able to carry the people with him by rational argument and persuasion. Still there were times when they bitterly resented his policy, and then he tightened the reins and forced them to do what was to their advantage, much as a wise physician treats a prolonged and complicated disease, allowing the patient at some moments pleasures which can do him no harm, and at others giving him caustics and bitter drugs which cure him. There were, as might be expected, all kinds of disorders to be found among a mass of citizens who possessed an empire as great as that of Athens, and Pericles was the only man capable of keeping each of these under control. He achieved this most often by using the people's hopes and fears as if they were rudders, curbing them when they were arrogant and raising their hopes or comforting them when they were disheartened. In this way he proved that rhetoric, in Plato's phrase,[2] is

1. 444 B.C.
2. *Phaedrus*, 271C.

the art of working upon the souls of men by means of words, and that its chief business is the knowledge of men's characters and passions which are, so to speak, the strings and stops of the soul and require a most skilful and delicate touch. The secret of Pericles' power depended, so Thucydides tells us,[1] not merely upon his oratory, but upon the reputation which his whole course of life had earned him and upon the confidence he enjoyed as a man who had proved himself completely indifferent to bribes. Great as Athens had been when he became her leader, he made her the greatest and richest of all cities, and he came to hold more power in his hands than many a king and tyrant. And in the end he did not increase the fortune his father left him by so much as a single drachma from the public funds, a source of wealth which some men even managed to pass on to their children

16. But despite his unselfishness, there can be no doubt as to his power, which Thucydides describes to us clearly, while even the comic poets testify to it unwittingly in some of their malicious jokes. For example, they nickname him and his associates 'the new Pisistratids', and call upon him to take the oath that he will never set himself up as tyrant, as if his supremacy were too oppressive and out of all proportion in a democracy. Teleclcides says that the Athenians had handed over to him

> The cities' tribute, even the cities themselves
> To hold or to set free as he thinks fit,
> And the cities' walls to build or to pull down,
> Their treaties and their armies, their power, their peace,
> Their wealth, and all the gifts good fortune brings.

And all this was by no means a sudden harvest, the climax of popularity of an administration which flourished only for a brief season. The fact is that for forty years Pericles held the first place among men such as Ephialtes,[2] Myronides, Cimon, Tolmides, and Thucydides, and after the fall of Thucydides and his ostracism, he exercised for no less than fifteen years a continuous, unbroken authority through his annual tenure of the office of general. During the whole of this period he proved himself completely incorruptible by bribery, although he was not altogether averse to making money. As for the wealth he had

1. ii, 65.

2. Plutarch is reckoning Pericles' career as having lasted from 469 to 429 B.C., but there is little doubt that Ephialtes was the leader of their party till his murder in 461 B.C.

legally inherited, he adopted what seemed to him the simplest and most exact method of dealing with it, to ensure that his fortune should not be dissipated by neglect nor yet cause him much trouble or loss of time when his mind was occupied with higher things. His practice was to dispose of each year's produce in a single sale, and then to buy in the market each item as it was needed for his daily life and his household. This arrangement did not endear Pericles to his sons when they grew up, nor did their wives find him at all a generous provider. They blamed his precise day-to-day regulation of expenses, since it allowed no margin for the superfluities which are usual in a great house in prosperous circumstances, but instead obliged his income and his purchases to balance one another exactly. He had one servant, Evangelus, who kept up all this meticulous accounting, and who was either exceptionally gifted by nature or else was trained by Pericles, so that he excelled everyone else in the science of domestic economy.

This course of conduct owed nothing to the wisdom of Anaxagoras, for the philosopher went so far as to abandon his house and let his land lie fallow and be grazed by sheep, while he pursued his lofty thoughts and his passion for speculation. However, the life of a contemplative philosopher is a very different thing, I take it, from the life of a statesman. The former brings his intellect to bear upon great and noble ends, but without the aid of instruments and independently of external factors; whereas the latter, in so far as he applies his gifts to the common needs of mankind, must sometimes regard wealth not merely as one of the necessities of life, but even as one of its nobler elements, as in fact was the case with Pericles, who gave help to many of the poorer citizens. It is said, too, that at a time when Pericles was absorbed in public affairs, Anaxagoras, who was by then an old man with no one to care for him, took to his bed and covered his face with his robe, determined to starve himself to death. When Pericles heard the news he was horrified, and at once ran to the poor man and begged him to live. He used every argument and entreaty and lamented not so much Anaxagoras's fate as his own, if he were now to lose such a trusted counsellor in matters of government. At this Anaxagoras, so the story goes, unmuffled his head and said, 'Pericles, even a lamp has oil put into it by those who need it.'

17. When the Spartans began to be vexed by the growing power of Athens, Pericles, by way of encouraging the people to cherish even

higher ambitions and making them believe themselves capable of great achievements, introduced a proposal that all Greeks, whether living in Europe or in Asia, in small or in large cities alike, should be invited to send delegates to a congress[1] at Athens. The subjects to be discussed were the Greek sanctuaries which had been burned down by the Persians; the sacrifices owed to the gods on behalf of Hellas to fulfil the vows made when they were fighting the Persians; and the security of the seas, so that all ships could sail them without fear and keep the peace. Twenty men were chosen from the citizens above fifty years of age to convey this invitation. Five of these invited the Ionian and Dorian Greeks in Asia and the islands, as far as Lesbos and Rhodes; five visited the regions on the Hellespont and those of Thrace as far as Byzantium; five others proceeded to Boeotia, Phocis, and the Peloponnese, passing from there by way of the Ozolian Locrians to the neighbouring mainland, as far as Acarnania and Ambracia, while the rest travelled through Euboea to the Oetaeans and the Maliac gulf, and to the Achaeans of Phthia and the Thessalians, urging them all to attend and join in the deliberations for the peace and well-being of Greece. However, nothing was achieved, and the delegates never assembled because of the covert opposition of the Spartans; at least this is the reason generally given, since the Athenian overtures were first rejected in the Peloponnese. I have mentioned this episode, however, as an illustration of Pericles' lofty spirit and of the grandeur of his conceptions.

18. In his military operations he was renowned above all for his wariness. He never willingly engaged in a battle which involved much danger or uncertainty, nor did he envy or follow the example of those commanders who have gained a reputation as great generals by running risks or trusting to exceptional luck; indeed, he often used to say to his fellow-citizens that, so far as it depended on him, they could count themselves immortals and go on living for ever. There was an occasion when Pericles found that Tolmides, a soldier who had previously enjoyed particularly good fortune and had had exceptional honours bestowed upon him for his campaigns, was preparing to

1. This may have been summoned in 448–447 B.C. just after Cimon's death. If so it was an ingenious diplomatic stroke in the 'cold war' of the period; for Sparta to have attended such a congress convoked by the Athenians at Athens would have amounted to a tacit acceptance of Athenian hegemony throughout Greece.

invade Boeotia. Tolmides had given no thought to the right moment for launching the attack, but he had persuaded 1,000 – without counting the rest of his force – of the bravest and most adventurous men of military age to volunteer. Pericles did his utmost in the Assembly to restrain Tolmides and dissuade him from going, and he remarked in a famous phrase that if he would not listen to Pericles, he would do well to be guided by Time, the most experienced counsellor of all. This saying did not bring him much credit at that moment. But a few days afterwards the news came that Tolmides had been defeated and killed in battle near Coronea[1] and that many of the bravest Athenians had fallen with him, and this greatly increased the admiration and good-will the people felt towards Pericles, since he now seemed to them a man of foresight as well as a patriot.

19. Of all his campaigns it was the expedition to the Chersonese[2] which was the most gratefully remembered, since it proved the salvation of the Greeks who lived there. Pericles not only brought with him a thousand Athenian colonists and so provided the cities there with fresh strength and vigour, but he also secured the neck of the isthmus with a fortified line stretching from sea to sea. By this means he barred the way to the Thracians, who had swarmed all over the Chersonese, and put an end to the constant and harassing border warfare to which the settlers had been exposed, since their territory marched with that of the neighbouring barbarian tribes and had been overrun by marauding bands, whose haunts were inside the frontier or close to it. But the venture which earned him most fame and admiration among foreigners was his voyage round the Peloponnese,[3] when he put to sea from Pegae[4] in the Megarid with a fleet of 100 triremes. He not only laid waste a long stretch of the coast as Tolmides had done before him, but he also led the heavy infantry from the ships, advanced far inland and inspired such fear in the enemy that they took refuge behind their walls at his approach. The only exceptions were the men of Sicyon, who made a stand against him in Nemea and engaged him in a pitched battle, but he routed them by main force and set up a trophy for his victory. After this he took on

1. 447 B.C.
2. 447 B.C.
3. 453 B.C.
4. A port on the Corinthian Gulf. The expedition was in fact confined to the northern Peloponnese and the gulf itself.

board troops from Achaea, which was friendly to him, and moved on with the fleet to the northern shore of the Corinthian Gulf. There he sailed past the mouth of the Acheloüs, overran Acarnania, shut up the people of Oeniadae[1] behind their walls, and after devastating their territory returned home. Throughout this expedition he had proved himself a terror to the enemy, and at the same time a prudent yet vigorous leader of his fellow citizens, for nothing went wrong, even by accident, from beginning to end of the operations for the men who took part in them.

20. Pericles also sailed into the Black Sea[2] with a large and splendidly equipped fleet, and there he treated the Greek cities considerately and secured by negotiation the various local arrangements which they desired. At the same time he demonstrated to the neighbouring barbarian states and their kings and princelings not only the strength of the Athenian forces, but also their confidence and their freedom to sail wherever they chose and to dominate these waters. He also left thirteen warships and a land force under the command of Lamachus with a group of exiles from Sinope to help them against Timesilaus. Later, when the tyrant and his supporters had been driven out of the city, Pericles had a decree passed that 600 Athenian volunteers should sail to Sinope and settle there with the inhabitants, dividing among themselves the houses and lands which had previously belonged to the tyrant and his followers.

But there were other instances when he would not give way to the Athenians' more reckless impulses. He refused to be swept along with them, when they became intoxicated with their power and good fortune, and talked of recovering Egypt and attacking the sea-board of the Persian Empire. Many people, too, even as early as this, were obsessed with that extravagant and ill-starred ambition to conquer Sicily, which was afterwards fanned into flame by Alcibiades and other orators. There were even some who dreamed of attacking Carthage and Etruria, and, indeed, their hopes were not altogether

1. An exceptionally well fortified town in Acarnania with pro-Spartan sympathies.

2. About 436 B.C. This was the first appearance of an Athenian general with a strong force beyond the Bosphorus. The control of the grain route along the Black Sea and the trading relations of Athens with this area were among her most vital interests, and a demonstration of strength here was a far-sighted diplomatic move.

ill-founded, when one thinks of the extent of the Athenian dominion at that time and the full tide of success which seemed to attend all their undertakings.

21. Pericles, however, constantly strove to curb this extravagant spirit of conquest, to restrain the desire to meddle with foreign states and to devote Athens' main strength to guarding and consolidating what she had already won. He considered that to hold the Spartans in check was one of the prime objectives of Athenian policy, and he set himself to oppose them in every way; he showed this in many of his decisions and particularly by the action which he took in the Sacred War.[1] The Spartans sent an expedition to Delphi and forced the Phocians, who were then in possession of the sanctuary, to give it up to the people of Delphi. But no sooner had the Spartans left than Pericles dispatched a counter-expedition and reinstated the Phocians. The Spartans had been given by the people of Delphi the right of precedence in consulting the oracle and had had the record of this carved on the forehead of the bronze wolf in the sanctuary. Now Pericles secured the same privilege for Athens and had it engraved along the right-hand side of the same wolf.

22. Events proved that Pericles was right in seeking to confine the power of Athens to Greece proper. First of all Euboea revolted[2] and he was obliged to lead an army against the island. Immediately afterwards the news arrived that Megara had gone over to the enemy and that an invading army under Pleistoanax, the Spartan king, was threatening the frontiers of Attica. Pericles now hurriedly brought back his army from Euboea[3] for the war in Attica. He did not risk an engagement with a force of hoplites, who were at once so numerous, so brave, and so eager for battle. But he took note of the fact that Pleistoanax was a very young man and that among his advisers he relied mainly on Cleandridas, whom the ephors had sent out with him on account of the king's youth to act as his tutor and adviser. Pericles opened secret negotiations with Cleandridas and soon succeeded in corrupting him with bribes and prevailing on him to withdraw the Peloponnesian army from Attica.

1. About 448 B.C.

2. 446 B.C.

3. This uprising was concerted between the Euboeans and the Peloponnesian states, to coincide with the end of the five years' truce between Athens and Sparta in the summer of 446.

When the expedition returned and dispersed to its various cities, the Spartans were so angry that they inflicted a heavy fine on their king. Pleistoanax could not pay this in full and so left the country, while Cleandridas who had retired into voluntary exile was condemned to death. He was the father of that Gylippus who later brought about the destruction of the Athenian expedition to Sicily. Nature seems to have bred avarice in the son as if it were a congenital disease, for Gylippus himself, after his brilliant exploits, was also convicted of taking bribes and banished from Sparta in disgrace. This story, however, is more fully told in my Life of Lysander.[1]

23. When Pericles made up his accounts for the campaign and included in them an item of ten talents for 'necessary expenses', the people gave their approval without asking inquisitive questions or probing the mystery further. Some writers, Theophrastus the philosopher among them, have asserted that every year on Pericles' initiative ten talents found their way to Sparta, and that with this money he conciliated all the leading men in office and so staved off a war; what Pericles was buying, however, they say, was not peace so much as time[2] in which to make preparations at his leisure and finally wage war all the more effectively. However this may be, he soon turned his attention back to the revolt in Euboea, crossed over with fifty warships and 5,000 hoplites and reduced the cities there to submission. He banished from the city of Chalcis the class known as knights, which consisted of the men of outstanding wealth and reputation, and he transported the whole population of Hestiaea from their territory and replaced them with Athenian colonists. He made an example of this one people and punished them relentlessly because they had captured an Athenian ship and put the whole crew to death.

24. Some four years later, after the Athenians and the Spartans had concluded their thirty years' peace, Pericles had a decree passed to authorize his expedition to Samos,[3] on the ground that the islanders

1. *Lysander*, Ch. 16.

2. By 435 B.C. the public works programme had been paid for and surpluses from the tribute began to accumulate; they had reached 6,000 talents when the Peloponnesian War broke out in 431. This money was 'paid back' to the various gods whose treasuries had financed the building programme, but could be drawn on by the state in case of extreme need.

3. 440 B.C.

had not obeyed the order given them by Athens to break off their war against Miletus.

Now it is commonly supposed that Pericles took these measures against Samos for the sake of Aspasia; so this is perhaps a suitable place to consider the extraordinary art or power this woman exercised, which enabled her to captivate the leading statesmen of the day and even provided the philosophers with a theme for prolonged and elevated discussions. It is generally agreed that she was Milesian by birth and that her father was Axiochus, and she is said to have set out to rival the career of Thargelia, an Ionian woman of earlier times, in marking down for her conquests only men of great power. Thargelia came to be a great beauty and possessed at the same time exceptional charm and intelligence. She had many lovers among the Greeks, all of whom she won over to the Persian interest, and in this way, since they were all men of high position and influence, the seeds of sympathy for the Persians were sown throughout the Greek cities. In the same fashion Pericles, too, according to some writers, was attracted to Aspasia mainly because of her rare political wisdom. Socrates visited her from time to time with his disciples and some of his close friends brought their wives to listen to her conversation, even though she carried on a trade that was anything but honourable or even respectable, since it consisted of keeping a house of young courtesans. Aeschines says that Lysicles[1] the sheep-dealer, a man of low birth and character, came to be the leading figure in Athens because of his marriage to Aspasia after Pericles' death. And in Plato's dialogue, the *Menexenus* – even though the first section is written partly as a parody of the rhetoricians – there is certainly this element of truth, namely, that the woman had the reputation of being associated with a whole succession of Athenians, who came to her to learn rhetoric. However, Pericles' attachment to Aspasia seems to have been a more passionate affair. His own wife was closely related to him: she had been married first of all to Hipponicus, to whom she bore Callias, who was nicknamed 'the rich', and her children by Pericles were Xanthippus and Paralus. Afterwards, when they found each other incompatible, Pericles legally handed her over to another man with her own consent and himself lived with Aspasia, whom he loved

1. He married Aspasia six months after Pericles' death. He was elected general with Nicias in 428, the first demagogue to attain this post, and was killed in Caria in the same year.

dearly. The story goes that every day, when he went out to the market-place and returned, he greeted her with a kiss.

Aspasia is referred to in the comedies of the time as the new Omphale, or Deianeira, or even Hera. Cratinus bluntly called her a prostitute in these lines:

> To find our Zeus a Hera, the goddess of Vice
> Produced that shameless bitch Aspasia.

Pericles is believed to have had an illegitimate son by her, who is mentioned by Eupolis in his play *The Demes*, where Pericles is introduced as asking

> Is my son alive?

and Myronides answers

> Yes, he would have been a citizen long before
> But for the shame of his mother, who is a whore.

Aspasia, they say, became so celebrated, that even Cyrus, the prince who fought his brother, the king, for the sovereignty of the Persian Empire, gave the name of Aspasia to his favourite concubine, who had previously been called Milto. She was a Phocaean by birth, the daughter of a man named Hermotimus, and when Cyrus was killed in battle, she was captured and brought to the king[1] and later gained great influence with him at court. These details concerning Aspasia come into my mind as I write, and it would have been unnatural to omit them.

25. However, to return to the war with Samos. Pericles is accused of getting the decree against the islanders passed at Aspasia's request for the benefit of the Milesians. The two states were at war over the possession of Priene, and the Samians had gained the advantage when the Athenians ordered them to break off the fighting and submit their differences to arbitration at Athens. The Samians refused and Pericles then set sail, dissolved the oligarchical government there, took fifty of their leading men and the same number of children as hostages and sent them to Lemnos. It is said, indeed, that each of these hostages was ready to give Pericles a talent on his own account and that he was offered even more by those who wished to prevent a democracy from being established in the city. Besides all this, Pissuthnes, the Persian

1. See Xenophon, *Anabasis*, i, 10.

satrap, who was particularly well disposed to the Samians, sent Pericles 10,000 gold staters and made a special plea for the city. However, Pericles accepted none of these offers, but dealt with the Samians just as he had already decided to do, set up a democracy there and sailed back to Athens. Thereupon the Samians immediately revolted, after Pissuthnes had contrived to steal away their hostages from Lemnos and had provided them in other ways with the means to carry on the war, and so once again Pericles came out against them with the fleet. He found that they were by no means passive or dismayed at his arrival, but were defiantly resolved to fight the Athenians for the mastery of the seas. There was a fierce naval battle near an island called Tragia, in which Pericles won a decisive victory, and with forty-four of his ships defeated a fleet of seventy, twenty of which were infantry transports.

26. After his victory and the enemy's flight, he lost no time in capturing the harbour and he then laid siege to the city of Samos. The Samians, in spite of their defeat, still ventured in one way or another to sally out and fight under the city walls. But soon a second and larger fleet arrived from Athens and the islanders were then completely blockaded. At this point Pericles took sixty triremes and sailed out into the open sea: most authorities agree that his object was to intercept a fleet of Phoenician ships on their way to help the Samians, and to engage them as far away from the island as possible. According to Stesimbrotus, however, his intention was to attack Cyprus, but this seems extremely unlikely.

In any case, whichever his plan was, he seems to have blundered. As soon as he had sailed away, Melissus, the son of Ithagenes, a philosopher who was then in command of the Samian forces, concluded that there was nothing more to be feared from the Athenians, either because of the reduced size of the fleet which was left, or perhaps because of the inexperience of the Athenian commanders, and so he prevailed on his fellow-citizens to attack them. In the battle which followed, the Samians scored a victory, took a large number of Athenian prisoners and destroyed many of their ships, so that they now gained command of the sea and were enabled to lay in warlike supplies, which they did not possess before: indeed, Aristotle goes so far as to say that Pericles himself was defeated by Melissus in an earlier sea-battle.

The Samians, by way of retaliation, branded their Athenian prisoners on the forehead with an owl, as the Athenians had once branded them with a *samaena*. The *samaena* is a warship with a turned-up beak, like a boar's snout, but it is broader than a trireme and has a paunch-like hull, and this makes it a swift sailer which can also weather a high sea. It got its name because the first ship of this kind made its appearance at Samos, where it was built by the orders of Polycrates the tyrant. This episode of the branding is supposed to be hinted at in Aristophanes' verse when he says:

The Samians are a deeply lettered people.

27. However this may be, as soon as Pericles heard of the disaster which had overtaken his fleet, he hurried back to the rescue. He defeated Melissus, who came out to meet him, routed the enemy and at once built a wall around the city, for he preferred to get the upper hand and capture it at the expense of time and money rather than of the wounds and the lives of his fellow-citizens. But as time went on, the Athenians grew impatient at the delay and were more and more eager to fight and it became difficult to restrain their ardour. Pericles therefore split up his force into eight divisions and made them all draw lots. He allowed the division which drew the white bean to eat well and rest, while the others did the fighting. This is the reason, so the story goes, why people who have had a day of celebration call it a white day, from the white bean.

Ephorus tells us that Pericles also used various siege engines, as their novelty particularly appealed to him, and that Artemon the engineer was present at these operations. He was nicknamed Periphoretus because he was lame and had to be carried in a litter to any works that needed his immediate attention. Heracleides of Pontus, however, refutes this story on the evidence of Anacreon's poems, which refer to Artemon Periphoretus as living many generations before the Samian war and these events. He says that Artemon was a man of luxurious habits and a weak character, liable to panic, who spent most of his time sitting at home with two slaves holding a bronze shield over his head, for fear that something might fall on it. If ever he was obliged to go out, he had himself carried about in a little hammock, which was slung so low that it almost touched the ground and this was the reason for his nickname, Periphoretus.

28. In the ninth month of the siege the Samians surrendered. Pericles demolished their walls, confiscated their fleet, and imposed a heavy fine on them, part of which they paid at once and the rest they agreed to pay at fixed intervals, and they also gave hostages as security. Duris the Samian magnifies these events into a tragedy and accuses Pericles and the Athenians of great brutality, although there is no word of this in Thucydides, nor Ephorus, nor Aristotle. He certainly does not appear to be telling the truth when he says that Pericles had the Samian captains and marines from each ship brought into the marketplace in Miletus and crucified there, and that when they had already suffered this torture for ten days he gave orders for their heads to be beaten in with clubs and their bodies thrown on the ground unburied. In any case, Duris is apt to overstep the limits of the truth, even when there are no personal interests of his at stake, and so it seems all the more likely that in this instance he has drawn a horrifying picture of his country's sufferings simply to blacken the name of Athens.

When Pericles returned home after subduing Samos, he had funeral honours paid to all the Athenians who had lost their lives in the campaign, and he won especial admiration for the speech[1] he delivered over their tombs, according to the usual custom. As he stepped down from the rostrum, many of the women of Athens clasped his hand and crowned him with garlands and fillets like a victorious athlete. Elpinice, however, came up to him and said: 'This was a noble action, Pericles, and you deserve all these garlands for it. You have thrown away the lives of these brave citizens of ours, not in a war against the Persians or the Phoenicians, such as my brother Cimon fought, but in destroying a Greek city which is one of our allies.' Pericles listened to her words unmoved, so it is said, and only smiled and quoted to her Archilochus's verse:

Why lavish perfumes on a head that's grey?

Ion says that his victory over the Samians gave Pericles a prodigiously high opinion of himself. He reflected that it had taken Agamemnon ten years to capture a barbarian city, whereas he within nine months had made himself master of the most important and powerful city in Ionia. In fact, his claim is not so unreasonable, for in this war

1. This ceremony probably dated from 463 B.C. It was held in the Cerameicus, outside the western gate of Athens.

the issue really was uncertain and the hazards very great, assuming that it is true, as Thucydides tells us,[1] that the Samians came very near to wresting from Athens her control of the seas.

29. A few years later, when the clouds were already gathering for the Peloponnesian war, Pericles persuaded the Athenians to send help to Corcyra in her war with Corinth[2] and so bring over to their side an island with a powerful navy at a time when the Peloponnesians had all but declared war on them. And yet when the people had agreed to this measure, Pericles sent a squadron of no more than ten ships under Lacedaemonius, the son of Cimon, as if his object were to humiliate him because Cimon's family was on especially good terms with the Spartans. Pericles intended to make sure that if no particular success were achieved under Lacedaemonius's command, then the latter would be discredited for his pro-Spartan sympathies, and so he allowed him only a few ships and sent him out against his will. In general he made a point of thwarting all Cimon's sons, on the pretext that they were not true Athenians, but had something alien about them even in their names, since one of them was named Lacedaemonius, another Thessalus, and a third Eleius, and their mother was believed to be a woman of Arcadia.

In consequence, Pericles was sharply criticized for the paltry size of the force he had sent. It was felt that it was too small to help the Corcyraeans in their hour of need, but that at the same time it provided those enemies of Athens who were accusing her of interference with an invaluable pretext, and he therefore reinforced it later with a larger squadron which arrived after the battle.[3]

This action enraged the Corinthians and they denounced the Athenians at Sparta. The Megarians also joined them to complain that they were being shut out and driven away from every market and every harbour which the Athenians controlled, contrary to the common rights of the Greeks and the articles of peace entered into upon oath. The people of Aegina also considered themselves oppressed and outraged and secretly bemoaned their grievances to the Spartans, as they did not dare to accuse the Athenians openly. At this point, too, Potidaea revolted, a city which, although a colony of

1. viii, 76.
2. 433 B.C.
3. See Thucydides, i.50.

Corinth, was subject to Athens, and the siege on which the Athenians then embarked further hastened the outbreak of the war.

In spite of all this a succession of embassies was sent to Athens, and Archidamus, the Spartan king, strove to placate his allies and bring about a peaceful settlement of most of their grievances. In fact, it seems likely that the Athenians might have avoided war on any of the other issues, if only they could have been persuaded to lift their embargo against the Megarians and come to terms with them. And since it was Pericles who opposed this solution more strongly than anyone else and urged the people to persist in their hostility towards the Megarians, it was he alone who was held responsible for the war.

30. It is said that a Spartan mission arrived in Athens to discuss this very subject and that Pericles took refuge in the pretext that there was a law which forbade the tablet on which the Megarian decree was inscribed to be taken down. 'Very well, then,' one of the envoys named Polyaïces suggested, 'there is no need to take it down. Just turn its face to the wall! Surely there is no law forbidding that!' This was neatly put, but it had no effect on Pericles, who seems to have harboured some private grudge against the Megarians. However, the charge which he brought against them in public was that they had appropriated for their own profane use the territory of Eleusis, which was consecrated to Demeter and Persephone, and he proposed that a herald should be sent first to them and should then proceed to Sparta to complain of their conduct. Pericles was certainly responsible for this decree, which sets out to justify his action in humane and reasonable terms. But then the herald who was sent, Anthemocritus, met his death at the hands of the Megarians, so it was believed, and thereupon Charinus proposed a decree against them. This laid it down that henceforth Athens should be the irreconcilable and implacable enemy of Megara, that any Megarian setting foot in Attica should be put to death, and that the generals, whenever they took the traditional oath of office, should swear besides this that they would invade the Megarid twice in each year, and that Anthemocritus should be buried with honours beside the Thriasian gates, which are now known as the Dipylon.

On their side the Megarians denied that they had murdered Anthemocritus, and threw the blame for the Athenians' actions upon

Pericles and Aspasia, quoting those famous and hackneyed verses from Aristophanes' *Acharnians:*

> Some young Athenians in a drunken frolic
> Kidnapped Simaetha, the courtesan, from Megara.
> The Megarians were furious, primed themselves with garlic
> Just like their fighting-cocks, then came and stole
> Two of Aspasia's girls to get their own back.[1]

31. The real reasons which caused the decree to be passed are extremely hard to discover, but all writers agree in blaming Pericles for the fact that it was not revoked. Some of them, however, say that his firm stand on this point was based on the highest motives combined with a shrewd appreciation of where Athens' best interests lay, since he believed that the demand had been made to test his resistance, and that to have complied with it would have been regarded simply as an admission of weakness. But there are others who consider that he defied the Spartans out of an aggressive arrogance and a desire to demonstrate his own strength.

However, the most damning charge of all,[2] and yet the one which finds most support, runs somewhat like this. Pheidias the sculptor had been entrusted, as I have mentioned, with the contract for producing the great statue of Athena. His friendship with Pericles, with whom he had great influence, earned him a number of enemies through sheer jealousy, while others made use of him to test the mood of the people and see what their temper would be in a case in which Pericles was involved. They therefore persuaded Menon, one of the artists working under Pheidias, to seat himself in the market-place as a suppliant and ask for the protection of the state in return for laying information against Pheidias. The people granted the man's plea and a motion for Pheidias's prosecution was laid before the Assembly. The charge of

1. *Acharnians*, 524ff.

2. Plutarch offers no opinion, but the facts do not support this charge. Other accounts suggest that Pheidias may have been prosecuted soon after the statue was dedicated in 438–437 and that he may have been exiled soon afterwards and died in Elis about 432. Anaxagoras is now believed to have retired to Lampsacus nearly twenty years earlier, and Dracontides' motion was not passed until 430 and therefore had no connexion with the outbreak of the war. Thucydides gives no hint that Pericles' ascendancy was being challenged in the period immediately preceding the war, but rather that the crisis strengthened it.

embezzlement was not proved, because from the very beginning, on Pericles' own advice, the gold used for the statue had been superimposed and laid around it in such a way that it could all be taken off and weighed,[1] and this was what Pericles now ordered the prosecutors to do.

However, the fame of Pheidias's works still served to arouse jealousy against him, especially because in the relief of the battle of the Amazons, which is represented on the shield of the goddess, he carved a figure representing himself as a bald old man lifting up a stone with both hands, and also because he introduced a particularly fine likeness of Pericles fighting an Amazon. The position of the hand, which holds a spear in front of Pericles' face, seems to have been ingeniously contrived to conceal the resemblance, but it can still be seen quite plainly from either side.

So Pheidias was cast into prison and there he fell sick and died. According to some accounts he was poisoned by his enemies in an attempt to blacken Pericles' name still further. As for the informer, Menon, a proposal was passed, on Glycon's motion, to make him exempt from all taxes and public burdens and the generals were ordered to provide for his safety.

32. About the same time Aspasia was put on trial for impiety. She was prosecuted by Hermippus the comic poet, who also accused her of procuring free-born Athenian women for Pericles and receiving them into her house. A decree was also introduced by Diopeithes, the diviner, to the effect that anybody who did not believe in the gods or taught theories about celestial phenomena should be liable to prosecution, and this was aimed to cast suspicion on Pericles through Anaxagoras. The people took up these slanders only too readily, and while they were in this mood a bill was passed on Dracontides' initiative directing that the accounts of the public funds that Pericles had spent should be deposited with the prytanes, and that the jurors should pronounce their verdict on his case with ballots which had lain on the altar of the goddess on the Acropolis. However, this clause of the decree was amended by Hagnon, who moved that the case should be tried in the usual way, but before a body of 1,500 jurors, no matter whether it was to be termed a prosecution for embezzlement or bribery or malversation.

1. See Thucydides, ii, 13.

Pericles contrived to beg off Aspasia by bursting into floods of tears during her trial, so Aeschines tells us, and making a personal appeal to the jurors, but he was so alarmed for Anaxagoras's safety that he smuggled him out of the city. Pericles had already fallen foul of the people on the occasion of Pheidias's trial and he dreaded the jury's verdict on his own case, and so now that the war was threatening and smouldering, we are told that he deliberately fanned it into flame. He hoped in this way to dispel the charges against him and make the people forget their jealousy, since he knew that as soon as any great enterprise or danger was in prospect, the city would put herself in his hands alone because of his great authority and prestige. These are the motives which are alleged for his refusal to allow the people to give way to the demands of Sparta, but the true history of these events is hidden from us.

33. The Spartans, for their part, recognized that if Pericles could be removed from power, they would find the Athenians much easier to deal with, and so they demanded that Athens should rid herself of the blood-guilt of Cylon,[1] in which Pericles' family on his mother's side had been involved, as Thucydides explains. But this manoeuvre produced exactly the opposite effect to what was intended; instead of being slandered and treated with suspicion, Pericles now found himself more trusted and honoured by the Athenians than ever before, because they saw that the enemy feared and hated him more than any other single man. For this reason, before king Archidamus led the Peloponnesians into Attica, Pericles announced in public to the Athenians that if the king should ravage other estates but spare his own, either on account of the personal friendship between them or else to give his enemies cause to slander him, he would present all his lands and the buildings on them to the state.

The Spartans and their allies then proceeded to invade Attica with an immense army commanded by Archidamus. They advanced, devastating the land as they went, as far as Acharnae, which is very close to Athens, and there they pitched camp, for they imagined that the Athenians would never tolerate this, but would march out and fight them from sheer pride and anger. Pericles, however, judged that it would be a terrible risk to engage 60,000 Peloponnesian and Boeotian hoplites, (for the first invading army was at least as strong as this) and

1. Pericles belonged to the house of Alcmaeon (see *Solon*, Ch. 12).

stake Athens' very existence on the issue, so he tried to pacify those who were longing to fight and were becoming restive at the damage the enemy were doing. He pointed out that trees, even if they are lopped or cut down, can quickly grow again, but that you cannot easily replace the men who fall in battle. He would not summon the Assembly for fear that he might be forced to act against his better judgement. Instead, he behaved like the helmsman of a ship who, when a storm sweeps down upon it in the open sea, makes everything fast, takes in sail and relies on his own skill and takes no notice of the tears and entreaties of the sea-sick and terrified passengers. In the same way Pericles closed the gates of Athens, posted guards at all the necessary points for security and trusted to his own judgement, shutting his ears to the complaints and outcries of the discontented. At the same time many of his friends continually pressed him to take the offensive, while his enemies threatened and denounced his policy, and the comic poets in their choruses taunted him with mocking songs and abused his leadership for its cowardice and for abandoning everything to the enemy. Cleon, too, was already attacking him, and exploiting the general resentment against Pericles to advance his own prospects as a popular leader, as we see from this poem in anapaests by Hermippus:

> Come now, king of the satyrs, stop waging the war
> With your speeches, and try a real weapon!
> Though I do not believe, under all your fine talk
> You have even the guts of a Teles.
> For if somebody gets out a whetstone and tries
> Just to sharpen so much as a pen-knife,
> You start grinding your teeth and fly into a rage
> As if Cleon had come up and stung you.

34. Pericles, however, remained immovable and calmly endured all the ignominy and the hatred which were heaped upon him without making any reply. He sent a fleet of 100 ships to the Peloponnese, but did not accompany it himself. Instead, he remained behind to watch affairs at home and keep the city under his control until the Peloponnesians withdrew. Then he set himself to placate the people, who were suffering severely from the war even after the departure of the Peloponnesians, and he won back some of his popularity by giving them various subsidies and proposing grants of conquered territories: he expelled, for example, the whole population of Aegina and divided

up the island among the Athenians by lot. The people could find some consolation, too, in the damage which was being inflicted on the enemy. The fleet, as it sailed round the Peloponnese, ravaged a very large area and sacked a number of villages and small towns, while Pericles himself led an expedition into the Megarid and devastated the whole territory. It was clear from this that although the enemy did the Athenians a great deal of harm by land, they themselves were also suffering severely from the sea. In fact, they would never have carried on the war so long, but would soon have called off hostilities had not an act of heaven intervened to upset human calculations.

For now the plague fell upon the Athenians[1] and devoured the flower of their manhood and their strength. It afflicted them not only in body but also in spirit, so that they raved against Pericles and tried to ruin him, just as a man in a fit of delirium will attack his physician or his father. They were urged on by his personal enemies, who convinced them that the plague was caused by the herding together of the country folk into the city. Here, in the summer months, many of them lived huddled in shacks and stifling tents and were forced to lead an inactive indoor life, instead of being in the pure open air of the country, as they were accustomed. The man responsible for all this, they said, was Pericles: because of the war he had compelled the country people to crowd inside the walls, and he had then given them no employment, but left them penned up like cattle to infect each other, without providing them with any relief or change of quarters.

35. In the hope of relieving these troubles and at the same time doing some damage to the enemy, Pericles manned 150 warships, embarked a large number of the best hoplites and horsemen, and was all ready to put to sea. The Athenians had high hopes of what such a powerful expedition might achieve and the enemy were equally alarmed by it. But at the very moment when the ships were fully manned and Pericles had gone on board his own trireme, an eclipse of the sun took place, darkness descended and everyone was seized with panic, since they regarded this as a tremendous portent. When Pericles saw that his helmsman was frightened and quite at a loss what to do, he held up his cloak in front of the man's eyes and asked him whether he found this alarming or thought it a terrible omen. When he replied

1. 430 B.C.

that he did not, Pericles asked, 'What is the difference, then, between this and the eclipse, except that the eclipse has been caused by something bigger than my cloak?' This is the story, at any rate, which is told in the schools of philosophy.

After this Pericles put to sea, but he seems to have achieved nothing worthy of such an important expedition. He besieged the sacred town of Epidaurus and raised hopes of capturing it, but he was frustrated by the plague which attacked and destroyed not only his own men but all who came into contact with them. He tried to console and encourage the Athenians, who had now turned against him because of this reverse. But he could not appease their anger or win them over quickly enough, before they had snatched up their ballots and made themselves masters of his fate, and they proceeded to strip him of his command and punish him with a fine. This amounted to fifteen talents according to the lowest account, while the highest places it at fifty. Idomeneus says that the public prosecutor referred to in the records of the case was Cleon, although according to Theophrastus it was Simmias, and Heracleides of Pontus mentions Lacratides.

36. After this the troubles of Pericles' public life were soon to be at an end, once the people had stung him and, as it were, left behind their fury in their sting. But his private affairs now caused him great distress. He had lost some of his closest friends in the plague and his affections had for some time past been torn by a family feud. Xanthippus, the eldest of his legitimate sons, was a spendthrift by nature, who had married a young and extravagant wife, the daughter of Tisander, Epilycus's son. Xanthippus resented his father's passion for economy and the meagre allowance he was given, and still more the fact that he only received it in small amounts. He therefore approached one of Pericles' friends and borrowed money from him, pretending that this was on Pericles' instructions. When the friend later asked for repayment, Pericles, so far from settling the debt, brought an action against him. Young Xanthippus was furious and began openly to abuse his father, telling stories to raise a laugh against him about his management of affairs at home and his conversations with sophists. For example, there was an athlete who had accidentally hit Epitimus the Pharsalian with a javelin and killed him, and Pericles wasted an entire day, according to Xanthippus, arguing with Protagoras as to whether, 'in the strictest sense', it was the javelin, or the man who threw it, or

the judges of the games, who should be held responsible for the accident. According to Stesimbrotus it was also Xanthippus who put about the scandalous story concerning his own wife's association with Pericles, and he says that to the very end of Xanthippus's life the quarrel between him and his father was never made up, for the young man fell sick and died during the plague. At the same time Pericles lost his sister and most of his relatives and friends, as well as those who had been his most trusted assistants during his administration. Yet not even these afflictions could make him despair, nor weaken his courage and nobility of purpose; he was not seen to weep even at the funeral rites or at the grave of any of his nearest kin, until at last he lost Paralus, his only remaining legitimate son. Even though he was crushed by this blow, he strove to persist steadfastly in his normal conduct and to sustain his greatness of spirit; but as he laid a wreath on the dead body, the sight overwhelmed him and he broke into a passion of tears and sobs, a thing he had never done before in his life.

37. The people tried other generals and politicians in turn to carry on the war, but they found that none of these possessed a stature or an authority that was equal to the task of leadership. So the city came to long for Pericles and summoned him back to the Assembly and the War Department.[1] Because of his grief he was lying at home in dejected spirits, but he was persuaded by Alcibiades and his other friends to appear again in public. After the people had made amends for their ungrateful treatment of him and he had once more taken over the direction of affairs and been elected general, he pleaded that the law concerning children born out of wedlock, which he himself had originally introduced, might be suspended for once in his favour. He asked this so that the name and lineage of his house should not die out for want of an heir.

The circumstances of this law were as follows. Many years before,[2] when Pericles was at the height of his power, and, as I have mentioned, had legitimate children born to him, he proposed a law that only those who could claim Athenian parentage on both sides should be counted as Athenian citizens. So when the king of Egypt presented Athens with 40,000 measures of grain and this gift had to be distributed among the citizens, a long succession of lawsuits began to be

1. 429 B.C.
2. 451–450 B.C.

brought against those whose birth was illegitimate according to Pericles' law, but who until that moment had escaped notice and never been questioned, and many of them suffered at the hands of informers. As a result nearly five thousand people were convicted and sold into slavery, while those who retained their citizenship and were acknowledged to be true Athenians were found after this scrutiny to number 14,040. It was therefore a very serious matter that this law, which had been enforced so harshly against so many people, should now be suspended in favour of the very man who had introduced it. However, the Athenians felt that the misfortunes which had overtaken Pericles in his family life represented a kind of penalty which he had paid for his pride and presumption in the past, and their hearts were touched. It seemed to them that retribution had fallen upon him, and that his plea was one which it was only human for him to make and for them to grant, and so they allowed him to enrol his illegitimate son in the family phratry lists and to give him his own name. This was the son who, many years later, defeated the Peloponnesians in the naval battle at the Arginusae Islands[1] and was put to death by popular decree along with his fellow generals.

38. Soon after this it appears that Pericles himself caught the plague. In his case it was not a violent or acute attack such as others had suffered, but a kind of dull, lingering fever, which persisted through a number of different symptoms and gradually wasted his bodily strength and undermined his noble spirit. At any rate Theophrastus in his *Ethics* discusses the problem of whether men's characters change according to their circumstances and whether they may be so deranged by physical suffering as to lose their former virtues. As an example he quotes a story that Pericles, as he lay sick, showed one of the friends who had come to visit him a charm which the women had hung round his neck, so much as to say that he was very far gone to allow such a piece of folly.

As he was now on his death-bed,[2] some of the leading men of Athens and the survivors among his friends were sitting around him, praising his virtues and the extent of his power and recounting his famous exploits and the number of trophies he had set up, for he had won no less than nine victories as Athens' commander-in-chief. They

1. 406 B.C.
2. He died in the autumn of 429 B.C.

were talking to each other in this way in his presence, supposing that he had lost consciousness and could no longer understand them. But Pericles had been following everything they said and he suddenly spoke out aloud. He was astonished, he told them, that they should praise and remember him for exploits which owed at least as much to good fortune as to his own efforts, and which many other generals had performed quite as well as himself, while they said nothing of his greatest and most glorious title to fame. 'I mean by this,' he went on, 'that no Athenian ever put on mourning because of me.'

39. Pericles deserves our admiration, then, not only for the sense of justice and the serene temper that he preserved amid the many crises and intense personal hatreds which surrounded him, but also for his greatness of spirit. He considered it the highest of all his claims to honour that, despite the immense power he wielded, he had never given way to feelings of envy or hatred and had treated no man as so irreconcilable an enemy that he could never become his friend. This fact by itself, it seems to me, removes any objection to his otherwise pretentious and childish nickname, and, indeed, gives it a certain aptness: a character so gracious and a life so pure and uncorrupt in the exercise of sovereign power might well be called Olympian, according to our conception of the race of gods who rule over the universe as the authors of all good things and as beings who are by nature incapable of evil. In this we part company from the poets, who confuse us with their ignorant fantasies and contradict themselves with their own fables. They tell us that the abode of the gods is a calm, untroubled place, which knows neither wind nor cloud, but shines for all time with a soft radiance and a clear light, and this, they suggest, is the mode of being that befits a blessed and immortal nature; but at the same time they represent the gods themselves as being filled with discontent, malice, anger, and other passions, which would disgrace even mortal men who possessed any sense. But these reflections belong to another place.

After his death, the course of events soon brought home Pericles' worth to the Athenians and made them sharply conscious of his loss. Those who in his lifetime had resented his power and felt that it overshadowed them turned to other orators and popular leaders as soon as he was out of the way, only to find themselves compelled to admit that no man for all his majesty was ever more moderate, or,

when clemency was called for, better able to maintain his dignity. Henceforth the public life of Athens was to be polluted by a rank growth of corruption and wrongdoing, which Pericles had always checked and kept out of sight, thereby preventing it from taking an irresistible hold. Then it was that that power of his, which had aroused such envy and had been denounced as a monarchy and a tyranny, stood revealed in its true character as the saving bulwark of the state.

7

NICIAS

[c. 470 – 413 B.C.]

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THERE is a true parallel, I believe, between the lives of Nicias and Crassus,[1] and between the disasters of the Sicilian and the Parthian expeditions. However, the first is a subject which Thucydides has already handled incomparably, surpassing even his own high standards, not only in the pathos but in the brilliance and variety of his narrative. So I must appeal to the reader not to think me as vain as Timaeus,[2] who flattered himself that he could outdo Thucydides in skill and show up Philistus as a thoroughly uninspired and amateurish writer. Under this fond illusion he launches confidently into the descriptions of battles by land and sea and the set speeches in which both these historians have already shown their genius. In practice Timaeus does not even come as near their level as

> One of the infantry
> Footslogging beside a Lydian chariot,

to quote Pindar's phrase: instead he shows himself to be the very embodiment of the immature yet pedantic writer:

> Dull-witted, stuffed with Sicilian lard for brains,

as Diphilus puts it. He often sinks to the level of Xenarchus, as for example when he gives his opinion that it was a bad omen for the Athenians that Nicias, whose name was derived from victory, began

1. In the disaster at Carrhae in the Parthian desert, Crassus was killed with 20,000 of his men and another 10,000 were taken prisoner (53 B.C.).

2. A native of Tauromenium (Taormina) born in 359 B.C., who wrote a history of Sicily in forty books. Philistus was born in 436 B.C. or earlier and was an eye-witness of the Sicilian campaign. He also wrote a history of Sicily, the first part of which extends from the earliest times to 406 B.C. After Thucydides these two authors are Plutarch's most important sources for this life.

by refusing command of the expedition; or that the mutilation of the Hermae was a divine warning that the Athenians would suffer their greatest reverses during the war at the hands of Hermocrates[1] the son of Hermon; or again that it was fitting that Heracles should take the side of the Syracusans for the sake of their goddess Kore who had delivered up Cerberus to him, and should be angry with the Athenians because they were helping the Segestans, a people descended from the Trojans, whose city he had destroyed in revenge for the wrongs done him by Laomedon.

In Timaeus's case we may put down his performance to the same sense of fitness which led him to correct the language of Philistus and find fault with Plato and Aristotle. My own view is that this kind of captious rivalry with other authors in matters of diction is the mark of a petty and donnish mind, and when it is applied to an inimitable masterpiece, such absurdity can go no further. There can be no question, of course, of passing over those of Nicias's actions which Thucydides and Philistus have recorded, especially since they throw so much light upon his character and disposition, which were so often obscured by his great misfortunes, but here I have only touched briefly on the essentials to avoid the charge of negligence. Certain facts, however, which have eluded most writers altogether, or have been mentioned only haphazardly by others, or are recorded only in decrees or in ancient votive inscriptions, I have tried to collect with care. In doing this my object is not to accumulate useless detail, but to hand down whatever may serve to make my subject's character and temperament better understood.

2. I may begin by quoting what Aristotle wrote of him,[2] that three men stood out as the finest citizens of Athens, men who practised an ancestral tradition of goodwill and friendship towards the people, namely Nicias, the son of Niceratus, Thucydides, the son of Melesias, and Theramenes, the son of Hagnon, although this tribute applies rather less to the last-named than to the others. Theramenes never succeeded in living down his foreign extraction as a native of Ceos,

1. A distinguished figure in Syracusan history who played a vital part in the downfall of the Athenian expedition, especially in keeping up the Syracusans' spirits before Gylippus's arrival. Thucydides describes him (iv, 58) as having foreseen Athenian ambitions ten years earlier at the congress of Gela.

2. *Constitution of Athens*, xxviii, 5.

nor his reputation as a trimmer, who throughout his political career was always shifting his allegiance, for which he was nicknamed 'The Buskin'.[1]

Thucydides was the elder of the other two, and as the leader of the aristocratic party he frequently opposed Pericles' attempts to win the people's support. Nicias, although considerably younger, had already distinguished himself in Pericles' lifetime to the extent of being appointed his colleague as general, and even on several occasions to an independent command. When Pericles died, Nicias quickly rose to the position of leader.[2] He owed his advancement mainly to the backing of the richest and most prominent Athenians, who hoped to establish him to offset the brutal insolence of Cleon, although for that matter the people were well disposed towards Nicias and ready to further his ambitions.

Cleon commanded a large following because of his practice of 'pampering the people and finding jobs for all', but even those whom he went out of his way to win over, when they saw the greed and effrontery of the man, turned to Nicias as their leader. Nicias, by contrast, wore an air of gravity which was by no means harsh or vexatious but was blended with earnestness and caution, and this won him the confidence of the people by giving the impression that he was positively afraid of them. Although he was by nature timid and inclined to defeatism, his good fortune enabled him to conceal his lack of resolution, at any rate in his military career, for he was consistently successful as a general. On the other hand in political life his very nervousness and the ease with which he could be put out of countenance by public informers were considered to be admirably democratic qualities. These characteristics gave him a large measure of that power which comes from standing well with the people. Their inclination is to fear those who disdain to court their favour and to promote those whom they can overawe, for, indeed, the highest honour the masses can receive from their superiors is not to be despised by them.

1. The loose boot worn by tragic actors, which could fit either foot.

2. He was the obvious successor both by temperament and by training to carry on Pericles' defensive strategy. Pericles had died in the autumn of 429 and the plague had left Athens so weak that she was incapable of undertaking any large-scale operations for another three years. Nicias's supporters were drawn not only from the rich but from the small-holders and refugees from Attica, to whom peace would mean the restoration of their farms.

3. Pericles had governed Athens above all by virtue of his natural superiority and the force of his eloquence and consequently he needed no disguises or specious promises in his dealings with the people. Nicias, on the other hand, lacked these qualities but was exceptionally rich and used his wealth to win their favour. He could not command either the opportunism or that knack of playing to the gallery with which Cleon constantly humoured the Athenian people, and since he had little confidence that he could beat Cleon at his own game, he tried to ingratiate himself by providing dramatic and gymnastic exhibitions and other forms of public munificence on a more expensive and sumptuous scale than anything ever seen in Athens before. Two of his offerings to the gods are still standing in my day – the statue of Pallas Athene on the Acropolis, which has lost its gold plating, and also the shrine placed under the tripods[1] in the precinct of Dionysus. Nicias won the prize many times with the chorus he presented, and, indeed, he was never defeated. There is a story that on one of these occasions a slave of his appeared dressed for the role of Dionysus. This actor was exceptionally tall and handsome and scarcely more than a boy, with the down still on his cheeks, and the Athenians were so captivated by his appearance that they burst into prolonged applause. Finally, Nicias rose to his feet and declared that it would be an act of impiety for him to keep as a slave a youth who had been consecrated to a god by public acclaim, and gave him his freedom on the spot.

The ceremonies which Nicias organized at Delos[2] have gone down in history both as acts of devotion to the god and as demonstrations of lavish public generosity. In earlier years the choirs which other cities sent for the worship of Apollo had been accustomed to put in at the island in a very haphazard style: the multitude of worshippers would run down to the ship and call on them to sing, not in any properly conducted ceremony, but as they scrambled off the ship in a disorderly crowd and were in the act of huddling on their robes and garlands. When Nicias took charge of the sacred company, he first put the choir ashore on the neighbouring islet of Rhencia, together with the sacrificial victims and everything else that was needed for the

1. The man who presented the winning chorus at these contests was awarded a bronze tripod as a prize.

2. Nicias's reorganization of the ceremonies took place in 426 B.C. An elaborate ritual seems to have been undertaken to purify the island, possibly as an appeal to Apollo to stay the plague, which had broken out again in Athens in 427.

ritual. Before leaving Athens he had had a bridge of boats made to the required size, magnificently gilded, painted and hung with garlands and tapestries. During the night this was placed in position across the channel between Rheneia and Delos, which is quite narrow, and at dawn he led over the procession in honour of the god, splendidly dressed and chanting their hymn as they marched. After the sacrifices and the choral contests and the banquets were over, he dedicated to Apollo the well-known palm-tree of bronze and also a small estate, which he had bought for 10,000 drachmae. The revenue from this was to be devoted by the islanders to offering sacrifices and providing themselves with a banquet, at which they would pray for blessings for Nicias from the gods. These instructions were engraved on a column which he set up on Delos, as it were to guard his benefaction. The bronze palm-tree was later overturned by a storm, fell against the colossal statue of the god presented by the people of Naxos, and threw it to the ground.

4. In all this there are signs of a certain vulgarity and ostentation aimed at increasing Nicias's prestige and satisfying his ambition. But to judge from his other qualities and his general character, it seems likely that his love of display was the outcome of his religious piety, and that the winning of popularity and hence of influence over the masses was quite a secondary object. He was one of those who stood in great awe of the supernatural and he was particularly subject, as Thucydides[1] tells us, to the influence of divination. It is mentioned in one of Pasiphon's dialogues that he offered sacrifice to the gods every day and always kept a diviner at his house. Nicias gave out that he was constantly taking the omens for guidance on matters of public policy, but, in fact, most of his questions concerned his personal affairs, especially his silver mines.[2] He was the owner of large concessions from the state in the mining district of Laurium, where the diggings were extremely lucrative, but also dangerous to operate. He kept a large labour force of slaves there and most of his wealth consisted of the silver which they produced. For this reason he was constantly surrounded by hangers-on, who not only pressed him for money but got

1. vii, 50.

2. Nicias held a concession on permanent lease from the state, and sublet both his mines and his slaves. He is said to have employed about 1,000 men, whose hire brought him a profit of an obol per head per day.

it out of him. It was his practice to make presents not only to those who had deserved well of him, but also to those he believed could do him harm, so that his fears were as much a source of income to scoundrels as his generosity was to honest men.

We can find evidence of this in the comic playwrights. Telecleides, for example, wrote these verses on one of the public informers:

> Charicles gave him a mina to stop him telling
> How he was his mother's first child, born in a purse.
> But Nicias, Niceratus's son, gave him four.
> I know the reason, too, but I'm not telling;
> For Nicias is my friend and a man I trust.

And the subject of Eupolis's comedy, *Maricas*,[1] brings on some poor inoffensive man in front of the audience and says:

> Maricas: How long is it since you met Nicias?
> Pauper: Not till this moment, in the market-place.
> Maricas: You see, he admits he *has* seen Nicias!
> But what for, unless he was up to no good?
> Chorus: You hear, my friends, Nicias was caught in the act!
> Pauper: You half-wits, do you suppose a man like Nicias
> Would ever be caught in any dirty work?

In Aristophanes' *The Knights*[2] Cleon utters the threat:

> I'll shout down every orator and put the wind up Nicias!

and Phrynichus gives us a hint of his lack of courage and of how easy it was to intimidate him in these verses.

> He was an upright citizen, as well I know,
> Not one to cringe and creep about like Nicias.

5. Nicias was so much on his guard against informers that he would never dine out with another Athenian or take part in an exchange of opinions or any of the normal social occasions, indeed, he would not even allow himself the time for amusements of this kind. When he served on the board of generals, he made it his practice to stay at the War Department till nightfall, and as a member of the Council he

1. Maricas, the leading character in this play was intended as a caricature of the demagogue Hyperbolus.
2. *Knights*, 358.

was the first to enter the Council-chamber and the last to leave it. Even when he had no public business on his hands, he made himself inaccessible by staying at home and locking his doors. Then his friends would go up to whoever might be waiting outside and beg them to excuse him, explaining that even at that hour Nicias was engaged on affairs of state and was not at leisure.

The person who helped him most to act out this part and invested him with an air of solemnity and importance was Hiero, a man who had been well educated in music and letters in Nicias's family. He claimed to be the son of Dionysius, surnamed Chalcus, a poet whose work is still extant and who had led the well-known expedition of Greek colonists to Italy and founded Thurii. Hiero handled all the secrets which Nicias entrusted to the diviners and he was constantly putting out to the Athenians stories of the onerous and care-worn existence which Nicias led for his country's sake.

'He can scarcely get a moment's peace at meal-times, or even in the bath,' Hiero would tell people, 'without his privacy being interrupted by some urgent public matter. He is so much concerned with the people's interests and so little with his own that he hardly ever goes to bed until most people are waking up. The result is that his health suffers and he cannot even be cheerful or at ease with his friends. He loses them as well as his own money through his devotion to Athens, while other men exploit their public activities to win friends and pick up fortunes, so that they can live in luxury and make politics their pastime.'

And in fact Nicias really did lead a life of this kind, so that he might have echoed Agamemnon's words in Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis*:

> My life is enthroned in pomp and majesty
> But I myself am the slave of the mob I rule.

6. He noticed that while the people were ready to make use of men who excelled in eloquence or intellectual power, they still looked on them with suspicion and constantly strove to humble their pride or detract from their reputation. There were unmistakable examples of this in the fining of Pericles, the ostracism of Damon,[1] the distrust of

1. Damon the sophist was Pericles' teacher (see *Pericles*, Ch. 4.) Antiphon, born about 480 B.C., was a celebrated orator and is reputed to have been the first to write speeches for money for others to deliver. He played

Antiphon of Rhamnus which brought about his downfall, and, perhaps most glaring of all, the case of Paches. The last-named was obliged, after his capture of Lesbos, to give an account of his generalship and finally drew his sword and killed himself in open court. Nicias, therefore, did his best to evade any difficult or lengthy enterprise; whenever he served as general he played for safety, and if he was successful, as he naturally often was under these conditions, he never claimed credit for any foresight, or energy, or courage on his part, but thanked his good fortune for everything and gave the glory to the gods, being well content to sacrifice his reputation in order to escape envy.

Events proved his wisdom. Although in those years the city suffered a number of disasters, Nicias had no hand in any of them. In Thrace, where the Athenians were beaten by the Chalcidians, Xenophon and Callias were in command. In Aetolia the defeated general was Demosthenes. At Delium they lost 1,000 men under Hippocrates. The plague was largely blamed on Pericles, because his strategy had confined the crowds of refugees from the country within the city walls, and it was they who were believed to have spread the pestilence because of the change in their surroundings and in their normal manner of living. Nicias, however, was not held responsible for any of these misfortunes. On the other hand under his leadership the Athenians captured Cythera,[1] an island which had been occupied by Spartan settlers and was well situated to command the Spartan mainland. He recaptured many places in Thrace and restored them to their allegiance to Athens. He also succeeded in shutting up the Megarians in their city and in seizing the island of Minoa, and advancing from there he afterwards captured Nisaea. He made a landing on Corinthian territory and won a battle in which their general Lycophron was killed and the Corinthians suffered heavy losses.

On this occasion it happened that when the Athenians took up their

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a leading part in the establishment of the anti-democratic regime of the Four Hundred in 411 B.C. and was executed after its fall. Paches was impeached after his successful operations at Lesbos in 427 B.C. but the charge is not known.

1. Plutarch is quoting examples here at random, regardless of chronological sequence, as he often does. Cythera was captured in 424. Minoa in 427, the raid on Corinth took place in 425, and the capture of Thyrea in 424. Hippocrates and Demosthenes, not Nicias, captured Nisaea in 424.

dead, two of their number were left behind unnoticed. Nicias, as soon as he learned this, halted the fleet and sent a herald to ask leave to take up the two bodies; and he did this, even though by unwritten law and custom the side which asked for a truce to recover its dead was regarded as having given up any claim to victory, and if this request was granted, it was no longer entitled to set up a trophy. The proof of victory consists in the final mastery of the field, and the side which asks leave evidently does not possess this, or else it would take what it wants. Nicias, however, preferred to renounce the victory and his personal triumph rather than allow two of his fellow-countrymen to lie unburied. He also ravaged the coast of Sparta, defeated the Spartan force sent to oppose him, took Thyrea,[2] where the Aeginetans had settled some years earlier, and those of them whom he captured he carried off as prisoners to Athens.

7. In the previous year Demosthenes had fortified Pylos[1] and the Peloponnesians had sent both land and sea forces to the peninsula. A battle took place and at the end of it some four hundred Spartan soldiers were cut off on the island of Sphacteria. The Athenians considered that the capture of these men would be an invaluable prize, as, indeed, it was. But the operation proved difficult, because the district was waterless and to carry supplies round the Peloponnese by sea was slow and expensive, even in summer, and risky or quite impossible in winter. In Athens the people began to lose patience and to regret that they had dismissed the Spartan delegation which had visited them to ask for a truce and to negotiate peace terms. This was Cleon's responsibility, as he had opposed the peace partly at least because Nicias supported it. He regarded Nicias as his natural enemy and it was because he saw him cooperating so eagerly with the Spartans that he persuaded the Athenians to refuse their offer.

Consequently, as the blockade dragged on and news came through that the besieging troops were themselves almost starving, the people's feelings began to turn against Cleon. He did his utmost to put the blame on Nicias, accused him of allowing the men on the island to slip out of his grasp because of his feebleness and timidity in command, and boasted that if he were general they would never have held out for so long. At this point it occurred to the Athenians to retort: 'It is

1. 424 B.C.
2. Thucydides tells the story in detail (iv, 3–41).

not too late even now. Why not sail out and bring the men back yourself?' Thereupon Nicias also rose to his feet in the Assembly and resigned his command of the Pylos expedition in Cleon's favour. He told Cleon to take as large a force as he liked and stop sheltering behind aggressive phrases which cost him nothing. Here was his chance to go out and perform some real service for his country. At first Cleon was completely disconcerted by this unexpected move and tried to draw back. But when the people urged him on and Nicias continued to taunt him, he lost his temper. Finally, his ambition was so far roused that he not only accepted the command but promised that within twenty days of sailing he would either wipe out the Spartans on the island or bring them back alive to Athens. The Athenians were more inclined to laugh at his undertaking than to believe in it, for they had long become accustomed to Cleon's insane bravado and treated it as an agreeable joke. There is a story, for instance, that once, when he had kept the Assembly for a long time sitting on the Pnyx and waiting for him to address them, he appeared towards evening, garlanded for a dinner-party, and asked them to adjourn the session until the following day. 'Today,' he exclaimed, 'I am not free to give you my time. I have guests to entertain and I have just been offering sacrifice to the gods.' At this the Athenians burst out laughing, rose, and dissolved the Assembly.

8. This time, however, luck was on Cleon's side. Together with Demosthenes he handled the operations so effectively that he succeeded, well within his time-limit, in taking prisoner all the Spartans[1] who had not been killed in the fighting and capturing their arms. This turn of events was very damaging to Nicias. To have thrown up his command out of sheer cowardice, and by voting himself out of office to have given his enemy the opportunity to win such a success was considered even more disgraceful than to have thrown away his own shield. Aristophanes sneers at him for this in *The Birds*:[2]

> Heavens, this is no time for us to doze
> Or dither about, like our friend Nicias!

and in his play, *The Two Farmers*:[3]

1. The original garrison numbered 420. Two hundred and ninety-two, including 120 Spartiates, were captured.
2. *Birds*, 638–9.
3. Not extant.

– I'd rather mind my farm.
– Who's stopping you?
– You are, my countrymen. I'd pay a thousand drachmae
Gladly, to give up my job and get out of town.
– Done! Then that makes two thousand, if you count
The thousand Nicias paid to give up his.

Apart from this, Nicias did a great disservice to Athens by allowing his opponent to gain so much power and prestige. Cleon now assumed an intolerable arrogance and an audacity which none could restrain, and this was to bring many disasters on the city, from which in the end Nicias himself suffered as much as anybody. Amongst other things it was Cleon's example which broke down all the conventions of decent behaviour in the Assembly. It was he who first introduced shouting and abuse into his speeches, as well as the habit of slapping his thigh, throwing open his dress and striding up and down the platform as he spoke, and his habits produced among the politicians an irresponsibility and a disregard for propriety which before long were to throw the affairs of Athens into chaos.

9. At this time, too, Alcibiades was beginning to become a power in Athens. He was not an out and out demagogue such as Cleon. But just as the soil of Egypt because of its very richness is said to produce

Many a wholesome drug growing side by side with a poison,[1]

so his was one of those exceptional natures which possessed immense potentialities both for good and for evil, and produced the most far-reaching changes in Athenian affairs. The result was that even when Nicias was rid of Cleon, he had no time to stabilize Athenian politics or to compose the differences within the city. No sooner had he set his country's affairs on the path of safety than the force of Alcibiades' ambition bore down upon him like a torrent, and all was swept back into the tumult of war.

It happened in this way. The two men in all Greece whose personalities offered the greatest obstacles to peace were Cleon and Brasidas. The war did much to conceal the viciousness of the one and glorify the valour of the other; it gave Cleon the occasion for many acts of injustice and Brasidas for a succession of triumphs in the field. When both men were killed in the same battle outside Amphipolis,[2] Nicias

1. *Odyssey*, iv, 230. 2. Autumn of 422 B.C.

quickly grasped the fact that the Spartans had for some time been anxious for peace, while the Athenians no longer had the same appetite for the war, in short, that both parties were exhausted and ready to drop their arms. Nicias therefore put forth all his efforts to reconcile them and to deliver the other Greek states from the evils of war: he hoped by the same token to gain a breathing space and to establish his reputation as a successful statesman for all time. He found at once that the older and more prosperous men, and especially those with a stake in the land, were already in favour of peace. For the rest he talked with many people privately, explained his views and soon succeeded in taking the edge off their enthusiasm for the war. Next he gave some encouragement to the Spartans and invited them to negotiate for peace. They were prepared to trust him because of his general reputation for fairness, and especially because of the decency and humanity he had shown in easing the lot of the Spartans who had been captured at Pylos and kept in prison in Athens. Both sides had already agreed to a suspension of hostilities for a year, and during those months it was possible for them to meet and taste the pleasures of security, of leisure, and of the company of foreigners and old friends. Gradually they came to long for the return of a life that was unspoiled by the miseries of war; they took delight in hearing such songs as the chorus from Euripides' *Erechtheus*

> Let my spear sleep until the spider
> Has woven her webs around it . . .

and they remembered gratefully the saying that in peace-time men are awakened by the sound of cock-crow, not of the bugle. They heaped abuse on those who said that the war was destined to last thrice nine years,[1] and, finally, having discussed in this spirit every point at issue, they concluded the peace.[2]

Most men were convinced that this solution had really delivered them from their troubles, and Nicias's name was on everyone's lips. He was praised as a man especially favoured by the gods, and one who as a reward for his piety had been chosen to give his name to the greatest and fairest of all human blessings. People were ready to believe, in fact, that Nicias was the man responsible for the peace, as Pericles had been for the war. Pericles, it was felt, had plunged the

1. This prophecy was made at the beginning of the war and Thucydides notes that it was one of the few which was exactly fulfilled.

2. In the spring of 421 B.C.

Greeks into terrible calamities on grounds that were all too slight, while Nicias had persuaded them to forget their greatest injuries and become friends. So to this day that armistice is known as the Peace of Nicias.

10. The treaty provided that each of the parties should restore the fortresses, cities, and prisoners which they had captured, and it was left to be settled by lot which side should surrender its gains first. According to Theophrastus, Nicias managed to arrange the matter secretly by bribery so that the lot should fall on the Spartans. But when the Corinthians and the Boeotians,[1] who were dissatisfied with the course of the negotiations, appeared likely by their accusations and complaints to bring back a state of war, Nicias persuaded the Athenians and the Spartans to secure the peace by uniting themselves in a mutual alliance. He hoped that this would make their own relations more stable and at the same time act as a formidable restraint upon any states that seceded from the settlement.[2]

During these exchanges Alcibiades made every effort to prevent the peace being concluded. Temperamentally he disliked inaction, and he was also offended with the Spartans for their obvious attachment to Nicias and their equally obvious disregard and contempt for himself. At first he made little progress, but before long he noticed that the Athenians were no longer so well disposed to the Spartans. They resented the separate alliance which the latter had formed with the Boeotians, and the fact that they had not, according to the terms of the treaty, restored Panactum[3] with its fortifications intact or Amphipolis[4] at all. Alcibiades fastened on each one of these grievances to stir up indignation, and finally invited the people of Argos to send a rival mission to Athens and set to work to negotiate an alliance with them.

When ambassadors arrived from Sparta, they came with full powers and at their first audience with the Council their proposals made a most favourable impression. Alcibiades now became alarmed that they would win over the people with the same arguments, and so he played a trick to outwit them. He promised to give them his

1. Both allies felt, not without some reason, that Sparta was trying to make peace without proper regard for their interests.

2. See also Thucydides, v, 18.

3. An Athenian fortress on the Boeotian frontier.

4. An important city in Thrace, which had revolted from Athens, and admitted Spartan troops.

full support in the Assembly, provided that they would not announce or even admit the fact that they came as plenipotentiaries, for these were the best tactics, he told them, to secure the terms they wanted. They allowed themselves to accept this proposal, abandoned Nicias as their adviser, and took up Alcibiades instead.

When Alcibiades presented them to the Assembly, the first question he asked was whether they had come with full powers, which the ambassadors denied, as they had agreed. Thereupon, Alcibiades, completely changing his front, called upon those members of the Council who were present to testify as to what the Spartans had said in front of them. He then urged the people to pay no attention, much less to trust the words of such outright scoundrels, who could say Yes one day and No the next to the same question. The Spartans, as was natural, were covered with confusion, while Nicias was so surprised and mortified that he could find nothing to say. Meanwhile the people's immediate impulse was to send for the ambassadors from Argos to conclude an alliance with them. Fortunately for Nicias at this moment the meeting was interrupted by an earth tremor, and the Assembly was forced to adjourn. Next day they met again, and Nicias, after a great deal of talking, succeeded with difficulty in persuading the Athenians not to conclude an alliance immediately with Argos, but to send him to Sparta, assuring them that everything would turn out well.

But when he arrived, although the Spartans treated him in general with great respect as a man of honour and one well-disposed towards them, he could achieve nothing, as the pro-Boeotian party was by now too strong for him. He was obliged to return not only discredited and heavily criticized, but positively in fear of the Athenians. His countrymen were now thoroughly aroused and resentful, because on Nicias's advice they had already released so many of their most valuable prisoners of war; for the captives who had been brought to Athens from Pylos in many cases belonged to the leading families in Sparta, or had friends or relatives among the most distinguished men there. However, the people did not take any very harsh steps against Nicias. They merely elected Alcibiades general and accepted the Mantineans and the Eleans – who had broken away from Sparta – into their alliance together with the Argives. Finally, they sent a party of free-booters to Pylos to ravage Sparta, and in this way they once more plunged into war.

11. At last the feud between Nicias and Alcibiades grew so bitter that it was decided to resort to an ostracism.[1] It was the custom of the people to arrange this at intervals and thus to banish for ten years any man who had become an object of suspicion on account of his great reputation, or who was unduly envied for his wealth. Both men now found themselves in a confused and dangerous situation, for it seemed that the ostracism was certain to fall upon one or the other. The Athenians detested Alcibiades' manner of living and they also feared his lawless nature, as is explained more fully in his biography. On the other hand they were jealous of Nicias for his riches, and all the more so because of his habits, which far from being genial or sociable were aloof and aristocratic and seemed quite alien in their eyes. Besides, he had often opposed their inclinations and obliged them to do what was in their true interests but against their wishes, and this, too, made him unpopular. To sum it up, the contest was between the younger generation who desired war, and the older who were for peace: the former wanted the ostracism to fall on Nicias, the latter on Alcibiades. But

Once civil strife has begun, even scoundrels may find themselves honoured,[2]

and so in this case the division of the city into two factions gave the most reckless and unscrupulous characters their opportunity. One of these was Hyperbolus of the deme of Perithoidae, a man whose audacity was based on no solid position of influence, but whose position, on the contrary, had been created simply by his own audacity; in fact, the very support he received was a disgrace to the city. At this moment Hyperbolus could feel confident that he was beyond the reach of ostracism, since he was, indeed, only fit for the pillory. He calculated that if one of his two opponents were banished, he himself might become a match for the survivor, and he openly rejoiced at their rivalry and tried to inflame public feeling against them both. The result was that Nicias and Alcibiades saw through his unscrupulous plan: they came to a secret agreement to combine their interests, and by setting all their supporters to work, they combined to divert the ostracism from themselves so that it fell on Hyperbolus.[3]

At first the people were delighted and treated the result as a great joke. But later they were angry at the thought that the institution of

1. February 417 B.C.
2. A proverb in hexameters attributed to Callimachus.
3. Probably in 417 B.C.

the ostracism should have been degraded by being applied to so utterly unworthy a creature. There was a general feeling that even punishment carries a certain dignity with it, or rather that the ostracism came as a punishment to men such as Thucydides or Aristides, whereas to Hyperbolus it was an honour which enabled him to boast that his iniquitous conduct had now earned him a place beside the greatest patriots. As Plato the comic poet expressed it,

> The man deserved the fate, deny who can:
> Yes, but the fate did not deserve the man.
> Not for the like of him and his slave-brands
> Did Athens put the sherd into our hands.

In the end the Athenians never again resorted to the ostracism. Hyperbolus was the last man to suffer from it, as Hipparchus of Cholargus, a relative of the tyrant Pisistratus, had been the first.[1]

How intricate are the workings of fortune and how unfathomable to human reason. If Nicias had risked a straight fight with Alcibiades, he would either have won and lived in safety with his rival expelled from the city, or, if he had lost, he would have left Athens before the disaster which finally overtook him and still preserved his reputation as a highly successful general. I know that according to Theophrastus it was Alcibiades and Phaeax, and not Nicias, who were involved in the ostracism which resulted in Hyperbolus's banishment, but most writers follow the account which I have given.

12. At any rate, when the embassy from Leontini and Segesta[2] arrived[3] to urge the Athenians to undertake an expedition against Sicily, it was Nicias who opposed them, but here he was hopelessly outmanoeuvred by the ambitious plans of Alcibiades. Before the Assembly had even met, Alcibiades had already dazzled the imagination of the people and corrupted their judgement with the glittering prospects he held out, so that the young men in the wrestling-schools and the old men in the shops or the public meeting-places sat about tracing maps

1. 488–487 B.C.

2. A small city some thirty miles west of the modern Palermo. Leontini was some twenty-five miles north-west of Syracuse. The Leontines had sent an earlier embassy in 427 and Athens had responded by sending twenty ships to protect the city. The present appeal came from the democratic party which had meanwhile been driven into exile.

3. In the winter of 416 B.C.

of Sicily or charts of the sea and the harbours and the coast-line facing Africa. For the Athenians had already come to regard Sicily not as a prize which would end this war, but as the spring-board for another, the advanced base from which they could embark on a struggle with Carthage and make themselves masters of Libya and the whole Mediterranean up to the Pillars of Heracles.

Since the majority were quite carried away by these schemes, Nicias found few supporters, and those of little influence, to help him oppose them. The rich were afraid of being accused of evading their contribution to the cost of the expedition and the provision of ships, and so kept silent against their better judgement. Nicias, however, did not give up, even after the Assembly had voted for the war and appointed Alcibiades, Lamachus, and himself to take command. When the Assembly met a second time, he rose in protest to throw his whole weight against the project, and finally he attacked Alcibiades, who, he said, was prepared to plunge the city into a difficult and hazardous war across the seas merely to satisfy his personal greed and ambition. But all his efforts proved in vain. The people considered that Nicias's experience made him all the more essential to the enterprise and that his caution would provide a most valuable safeguard against Alcibiades' daring and Lamachus's forthrightness, if his qualities were blended with theirs, and, in fact, all that he said only served to confirm the previous vote. Then Demostratus, who was the most active of the popular leaders in urging the Athenians to undertake the expedition, declared that he would put an end to Nicias's excuses and moved that the commanders should be given absolute authority both at home and abroad for the planning and conduct of the campaign. This motion was passed by the Assembly.[1]

13. The priests, on the other hand, are said to have been strongly opposed to the expedition. But Alcibiades was able to produce rival prophets, and from a number of supposedly ancient oracles he quoted one which predicted that a great triumph awaited the Athenians in Sicily. Other messengers, who had been sent to the shrine of Zeus Ammon,[2] returned with an oracle which reported that 'the Athenians were destined to take all the Syracusans'; at the same time they kept back such prophecies as suggested anything to the contrary for fear of

1. March 415 B.C.
2. In the Libyan desert.

uttering words of ill-omen. But in any case not even the most palpable and unmistakable warnings, such as the mutilation of the Hermae,[1] could turn the people from their purpose. These statues were all disfigured in a single night, except for one known as the Hermes of Andocides, which had been dedicated by the Aegeid tribe and placed in front of the house where Andocides lived. Another portent was the pollution of the altar of the twelve gods, where a man suddenly leaped up, straddled it with his legs, and castrated himself with a stone.

At Delphi, too, there stood a golden statue of Pallas Athene, mounted on a bronze palm-tree, which the Athenians had dedicated out of the prizes for valour which they had won in the Persian wars. Crows settled on this image and pecked at it for several days and also bit off and threw to the ground the golden fruit of the tree. The Athenians, it is true, declared that this was nothing more than an invention of the priests of Delphi prompted by the Syracusans. But when they were advised by another oracle to fetch the priestess of Pallas from Clazomenae, her name when she arrived turned out to be Hesychia, and by this coincidence the oracle seemed to advise the city to remain at peace.

There was also the case of the astrologer Meton, who had been appointed to a command in the expedition. Whether he was impressed by these signs or had already convinced himself of its failure by his own calculations, he pretended to be mad and set fire to his own house. There is another version of the story, however, according to which Meton made no pretence of being mad, but burned his house down in the night and then presented himself in the greatest distress to the Assembly, and begged that on account of this misfortune his son, who was to have sailed to Sicily in command of a warship, should be released from the expedition. Socrates the philosopher, too, is said to have received a warning from his inner voice, which intimated to him by the signs which it usually employed that the expedition would bring disaster to Athens. He mentioned this to a number of his closest friends and the story became widely known.

Others were also disturbed by the season of the year at which it was decided to dispatch the fleet. It was the moment when the women of Athens were celebrating the festival of Adonis, and in many parts of the city little images of the dead youth were being carried in funeral processions, accompanied by the wailing cries of the women, so that

1. May 415 B.C.

all who paid attention to such omens were filled with misgivings for the fate of the men setting out. A sudden dread seized them that this mighty expedition, fitted out with such magnificence and expense, might in its very prime be blasted and come to nothing.

14. In opposing the decision of the Assembly, and again in refusing to be buoyed up by false hopes, or to be so carried away by the importance of the command that was offered him as to alter the opinion he had formed, Nicias proved himself to be a man of principle and sound judgement. But when, after all his efforts, he had failed to persuade the people either to abandon the campaign or to relieve him of his appointment, and found himself as it were conscripted into the command of this great enterprise, then he should have recognized that it was too late for that excessive caution and hesitation of his. He should not, like a child, have cast lingering glances homeward from his ship or continued to protest that the people had not listened to his advice. The only result of his dwelling on all this was to dull the ardour of his colleagues and to let slip countless opportunities for action. The right course would have been to come to grips at once with the enemy and put his fortunes to the test in battle. As it was, Lamachus was in favour of sailing direct to Syracuse and offering battle under the walls, while Alcibiades proposed that they should first detach the Syracusans' neighbouring allies from their allegiance and then attack the city. Nicias, however, opposed both plans and could think of nothing more effectual than to cruise around the shores of Sicily, make a demonstration in strength, and then, after leaving a small contingent at Segesta, return to Athens. In this way he soon weakened his men's resolution and depressed their spirits.

Soon after this[1] the Athenians recalled Alcibiades to stand his trial in Athens and Nicias was left, nominally jointly responsible with Lamachus, but in reality in supreme command. For his strategy he could offer nothing better than sitting idly at his base, cruising around the island, or drawing up plans, until the bright hopes with which the expedition had originally set out had faded, and the terror and dismay which the first sight of his fleet had caused the enemy had quite melted away.

While Alcibiades was still with the fleet, they had sailed for Syracuse with a force of sixty warships. Fifty of these had been drawn up

1. August 415 B.C.

outside the harbour, while the remaining ten rowed in to reconnoitre and issued a formal proclamation that the Leontines should return to their homes. They also captured an enemy vessel carrying the register of the names of all the citizens of Syracuse, arranged by tribes. These records were kept outside the city in the temple of Olympian Zeus, and had been sent for to prepare a list for conscripting those of military age. The Athenian generals studied them and learned how great was the manpower of Syracuse, while the diviners were disturbed for fear that the prophecy that 'the Athenians would take all the Syracusans' might signify nothing more than this. It has been said, however, that this prophecy was fulfilled for Athens on another occasion, when Callippus the Athenian killed Dion and took possession of Syracuse.[1]

15. Soon after this Alcibiades sailed away from Sicily[2] and all the effective authority devolved upon Nicias. His colleague, Lamachus, was a stout-hearted and honest soldier, who exposed himself fearlessly in battle, but his circumstances were so humble that whenever he sent in his accounts for a campaign, he was in the habit of claiming expenses for his clothes and shoes. By contrast Nicias cut a far more imposing figure both on account of his wealth and of his reputation in public life. It is said that on one occasion at the council of generals, when he was discussing some question with his colleagues, Nicias called upon Sophocles, as the senior officer on the board, to give his opinion first, to which Sophocles replied: 'I may be the oldest man here, but you are the senior general.'

In the same way, Lamachus, though an abler general, was now subordinated to Nicias's authority, and the result was nothing but overcautious and hesitant tactics. First Nicias made a cruise round the island at the farthest possible distance from the enemy, which served only to build up their confidence. Then, when he ventured to besiege the small town of Hybla, he withdrew before capturing it, thereby earning the utmost contempt from the Syracusans. Finally, he sailed back to Catana without having accomplished anything more than the sack of Hyccara,[3] a stronghold of the barbarians. It is said that Lais, the

1. 353 B.C.

2. August 415 B.C.

3. On the north coast, some fifteen miles west of Palermo. Thucydides mentions that the ransom or sale of the prisoners realized 120 talents. Catana, about forty miles north of Syracuse, was used by the Athenians as their headquarters during the first year of the expedition and afterwards as a main supply base.

famous courtesan, then a young girl, was among the prisoners captured there, and that she was sold and taken to the Peloponnese.

16. By the end of the summer the Sicilians were reported to have grown so confident that they planned to pass over to the offensive and attack Nicias. Already their cavalry had begun to ride up to the edge of the Athenian camp and taunt the soldiers, asking them whether they had really come to restore the Leontines' territory to them or whether it was not to settle in Catana themselves, and so at last, though very reluctantly, Nicias set sail for Syracuse. As he was anxious to establish his army safely ashore without opposition, he secretly sent an agent from Catana to the Syracusans with the intelligence that if they would march there with their whole army on a certain day, they could attack the Athenian camp while it was undefended and capture it with all its equipment. The agent also told them that the pro-Syracusan party inside the city, where the Athenians spent most of their time, had planned to seize the gates and set fire to the Athenian fleet as soon as the attacking force had signalled its presence; he made out that the Syracusans had many supporters who were eagerly waiting for them to arrive.

This was the best stroke of generalship that Nicias achieved in the entire Sicilian campaign. He succeeded in drawing the whole of the enemy's strength away from Syracuse, so that the city was left almost undefended. He then sailed from Catana, made himself master of the two harbours of Syracuse, and secured a strong position for his camp; this was so sited that he would be at no disadvantage in his weakest arm, the cavalry, while it gave him freedom of manoeuvre for his strongest, the heavy infantry.[1]

When the Syracusans hurried back from Catana and drew up their army for battle in front of their city, Nicias at once attacked and defeated them. Their losses were not heavy, because their cavalry were able to check the Athenian pursuit. Nicias had, however, destroyed the bridges over the river Anapus and this gave Hermocrates the opportunity to encourage the Syracusans by saying that Nicias's strategy was ridiculous, since his main object seemed to be to avoid fighting, as if fighting were not the very thing for which he had come to Sicily. Still Nicias inspired so much fear and dismay among the Syracusans, that instead of their fifteen generals who were then serving,

1. November 415 B.C.

they appointed three commanders,[1] and the people took a special oath to allow these men to exercise absolute authority.

Not far from the camp there stood the temple of Olympian Zeus. The Athenians advanced to occupy it, since it contained a rich collection of gold and silver offerings, but Nicias deliberately held back and allowed a Syracusan garrison to move in. He felt that it would be of no advantage to the Athenian cause if his troops plundered these treasures and that he himself would bear the responsibility for the sacrilege. Meanwhile, the news of his victory spread throughout the island, but Nicias did nothing whatever to exploit it. Instead, after waiting for a few days, he withdrew to the town of Naxos and passed the winter there. He spent immense sums in maintaining his army, but achieved very little in his negotiations with the few Sicels who came over to his side. So once more the Syracusans regained their courage and undertook a raid on Catana, devastating the country and burning what had been the Athenian camp. Everybody blamed Nicias for this and complained that by his continual hesitation and excessive caution he had thrown away every opportunity for action. Yet when he did nerve himself to act, his performance was beyond reproach, for he was as vigorous and effective in executing his plans as he was slow and timid in forming them.

17. At any rate, when he finally moved his force back to Syracuse,[2] he carried out the move with such speed and dexterity that he reached the peninsula of Thapsus[3] with the fleet, disembarked his men and occupied the heights of Epipolae before the enemy had learned of his approach. He then beat back an attack by picked companies which had come up to restore the position, captured some three hundred of them, and even routed the cavalry, which up till then had been considered invincible.

But the achievement which most of all alarmed the Sicilians and seemed almost incredible to the Greeks was that in a matter of weeks he surrounded Syracuse with a wall, although it was a city as large as Athens and much more difficult to encircle because of the unevenness

1. One of them was Hermocrates.

2. In March 414 B.C., after a cavalry reinforcement and supplies of money had arrived from Athens.

3. A rocky peninsula forming the north arm of the bay directly north of Syracuse. Epipolae is the triangular plateau, surrounded by steep cliffs, which stretches inland from the western side of the city.

of the ground, and the fact that it was bordered both by the sea and by marshes. He came within an ace of completing the task in spite of the fact that his health was by no means equal to his responsibilities, for he was suffering cruelly at this time from a stone, and it is fair to blame his illness for the little that was left undone. And, indeed, here it is time to pay a tribute to Nicias's perseverance and to the courage of his soldiers in achieving what they did. After the defeat and annihilation of the expedition, Euripides wrote their epitaph:

> Eight times they triumphed over the Syracusans in battle
> Till the immortal gods shifted the balance of fate.

and, in fact, the Athenians won more than eight victories over the Syracusans, before the gods, as the poet describes it, or fate turned against them, at the moment when they seemed to have reached the very height of their power.

18. In spite of his weakness, Nicias forced himself to be present at most of these actions. But once, when his sickness reached a crisis, he was confined to his bed inside the camp and was left with only a few attendants. Lamachus had taken over command and was engaging the Syracusans, who were trying to run a cross-wall out from the city so as to intersect the Athenians' wall and prevent it from encircling them completely. The Athenians drove back the enemy in the close fighting, but allowed themselves to lose formation in the pursuit, so that Lamachus found himself cut off and was then confronted by a body of Syracusan cavalry which swept down on him. One of the most redoubtable and daring of the Syracusan officers, named Callicrates, called out Lamachus to single combat. The Athenian general accepted the challenge, came forward and received the first thrust, but he succeeded in closing with his adversary and returning the blow, so that he and Callicrates fell together. The Syracusans gained possession of his body with its armour and carried it off, and then charged the rampart of the Athenian camp, where Nicias lay unprotected. Nicias rose to the situation and saw the danger at once: he ordered his attendants to collect all the timber used for siege operations, which lay scattered in front of the rampart and set fire to it and to the siege-machines themselves. This action halted the attack and saved Nicias and the defences and all the Athenian equipment, for as soon as the Syracusans

saw the great column of flame which leaped up between themselves and the rampart, they withdrew.

Nicias was thus left in sole command, but by this time[1] his hopes were high. Now that he had gained the upper hand, there was a general move among the Sicilians to come over to his side. Some of the cities began to waver in their allegiance and ship-loads of grain appeared in his camp from every quarter. Besides this, those of the Syracusans who had despaired of defending their city had already begun to make proposals for peace. At this moment, too, Gylippus, who was on his way from Sparta to help the Syracusans, heard the news that they had been walled up and were in the greatest difficulties. He decided to continue his voyage in order to save the Greek cities in Italy, if that were still possible, but he regarded Sicily as already lost. The opinion now began to gain strength that the Athenians were carrying all before them and were led by a general whose luck and judgement rendered him invincible.

Even Nicias himself, contrary to his normal disposition, felt suddenly elated by his present strength and good fortune, especially because he was led to believe by the agents, sent to him secretly from Syracuse, that the city was about to surrender on terms. For this reason he paid no attention to Gylippus's arrival and did not even set any watch to intercept him. So, finding that the Athenians disdained to notice him, Gylippus took advantage of their carelessness and slipped in through the straits of Messina. He landed at Himera on the north coast, a long way from Syracuse, and was able to recruit a large force before the Syracusans had heard of his arrival, or even knew when to expect him. Indeed, a meeting of the assembly had actually been summoned to discuss opening negotiations with Nicias and some of the Syracusans were already on their way to it, feeling that they must come to terms before the city was completely encircled, for by this time only a short stretch of the Athenian wall remained to be finished and the materials lay strewn all along its length.

19. But just then, in the very nick of time, Gongylus arrived[2] in a single warship from Corinth. The whole city, as may be imagined, ran down to the water-front to meet him, and he then told them that Gylippus was close at hand and other ships were sailing to their rescue.

1. About June 414 B.C.
2. About the end of June 414 B.C.

At first they would not believe the news, but presently a messenger arrived from Gylippus himself, ordering them to march out and meet him. At this their spirits revived at once and they prepared for action. Soon after Gylippus's troops arrived, and he at once drew them up in battle order against the Athenians. At the same time Nicias formed his line, and Gylippus thereupon piled arms in sight of the Athenians and sent a herald to offer them a safe conduct if they would withdraw from Sicily. Nicias did not deign to reply to this offer. But some of the Athenian soldiers laughed at Gylippus and asked the herald whether the presence of a single Spartan coarse cloak and staff had so transformed the Syracusans' prospects that they could afford to despise the Athenians. Remember, they said, that we have only just freed the 300 Spartan prisoners from Sphacteria from their chains, and all of them were bigger men and had longer hair than Gylippus.

According to Timaeus the Sicilians were not greatly impressed by Gylippus. At first they made fun of his cloak and his long hair, and later on they were to charge him with meanness and greed. But he also says that from the first moment when Gylippus appeared, the Syracusans flocked round him, like birds around an owl, and were eager to serve under him, and the second statement is no doubt the truer. In his staff and cloak they recognized the symbols of the dignity of Sparta, and it was these which drew them to him. According to Thucydides it was Gylippus who transformed the whole balance of the campaign, and this is also the opinion of Philistus, who was himself a citizen of Syracuse and an eye-witness of these events.

The Athenians had the better of the first action and they killed a number of Syracusans, and also Gongylus of Corinth. But on the very next day, Gylippus showed them what an experienced commander can achieve, for on the same battle-field and with the same arms and horses, simply by changing his tactics he inflicted a defeat on the Athenians. As they fell back to their camp he checked the Syracusans in their pursuit and proceeded to turn to his own use the very stones and other building materials which the enemy had brought up. He extended the cross-wall until it cut the Athenians' wall of encirclement in such a way that even if the latter prevailed in the field, they would not be able to exploit their victory.

The Syracusans were encouraged by this success to man their ships, while at the same time they patrolled the countryside with their own and their allies' cavalry and brought in many prisoners. Gylippus also

began to visit the neighbouring cities in person and succeeded in rousing and uniting them to take vigorous action under his leadership. The result was that Nicias, when he saw how much the situation had worsened, relapsed into his previous state of pessimism. He now sent a dispatch to Athens urging the people either to send a fresh army or to recall his own force, and requesting them in any case to relieve him of his command on account of his ill-health.

20. The Athenians had already considered sending a fresh expedition some time before.[1] Nicias's earlier successes had aroused jealousy and hence caused a number of delays, but this time at any rate they were eager to reinforce him. It was decided that Demosthenes should sail with a large expedition in the spring, while Eurymedon set out first in mid-winter, carrying money for the army and also the news that Euthydemus and Menander had been selected from among the officers serving on the expedition to be joint commanders with Nicias.

Before Demosthenes could arrive, however, the Syracusans suddenly attacked both on land and sea. At first Nicias's fleet was hard pressed, but he managed to turn the tables and in the end sank a large number of the Syracusans' ships. But he was not quick enough to rescue his troops on shore at the critical moment. Gylippus made a surprise attack on the forts at Plemmyrium[2] and captured them. A great part of the Athenians' naval equipment, as well as large sums of money, had been stored there and all of it fell into his hands, while most of the garrison were killed or taken prisoner. Far the most serious consequence, however, was the interruption of Nicias's supplies. As long as the Athenians had held Plemmyrium, these had been brought in quickly and safely enough, but now that they had lost it the supply route could only be kept open with great difficulty, as it was exposed to constant attack from the enemy warships, which could lie at anchor under the fort.

For their part, the Syracusans were convinced that they had lost the naval battle not because of the Athenians' superior strength but through their own mistakes, in particular because they had abandoned formation in the pursuit, and so they pressed on vigorously in re-equipping their fleet for a second attempt. Nicias, however, was not

1. September 414 B.C. See also Thucydides, vii, 11–15.

2. A promontory which runs out opposite the city of Syracuse and forms the southern arm of the great harbour.

at all inclined to seek battle at the moment. It would be the height of folly, he argued, to venture upon another engagement at a time when his own forces were reduced and ill-provided, and just as a large and well-equipped fleet under Demosthenes was hurrying to their rescue.

On the other hand the newly promoted Euthydemus and Menander were strongly tempted to risk a battle, partly through personal ambition and partly through their jealousy of the other two generals; they hoped to outshine Nicias on the spot and to distinguish themselves before Demosthenes could arrive. They therefore made great play with the prestige of Athens, which they maintained would be irretrievably damaged if they refused battle with the Syracusan fleet, and on this pretext they overruled Nicias and forced a decision to fight by sea. In the action that followed, they were outmanoeuvred by Ariston, the Corinthian (whose trick with the mid-day meal[1] has been described by Thucydides[2]), and were defeated with heavy losses. Nicias was plunged into the deepest despair, when he reflected that to crown the disasters he had experienced when he was in sole command, he must now suffer through the blunders of his colleagues.

21. But at this point[3] the splendidly equipped reinforcements commanded by Demosthenes were suddenly sighted outside the harbour, a fleet so imposing as to strike terror into the Syracusans. He had seventy-three warships, carrying 5,000 heavy infantry and a force of 3,000 archers, javelin-throwers, and slingers. The flash of their armour, the brilliant colours of the ships' flags and the martial sound of the boatswains and flute-players calling the time to the rowers, all combined to create an effect of power and splendour which was calculated to dismay the enemy. For a time the Syracusans in their turn were thoroughly disheartened: there seemed to be no end or respite to their difficulties, and they could see themselves only struggling against odds and sacrificing their lives to no purpose.

However, Nicias did not have long to rejoice at this addition to his strength, for at their first conference Demosthenes pressed for an immediate attack on the enemy. His appreciation was that they should

1. The Syracusans, after prolonged skirmishing, suddenly broke off the action and went ashore. They then took their mid-day meal close by, quickly re-embarked, and attacked. The Athenians had assumed there would be no more fighting that day and were completely taken by surprise.

2. vii. 36–41.

3. July 413 B.C.

stake everything on a swift and decisive operation, and either capture Syracuse or else return home. Nicias was alarmed at his dash and audacity and opposed any hasty or desperate attempt. His own opinion was that time was on the Athenians' side, since the enemy were already short of money and would soon lose the support of their allies. Once they found themselves in serious difficulties, he had only to wait for them to open negotiations with him as they had done before. He was, in fact, still in secret correspondence with a considerable party inside the city, who advised him to be patient, as the people were by now exhausted by the war and tired of Gylippus, and it needed only a little more pressure to induce them to give up altogether.

However, as Nicias would only hint at these considerations and refused to speak out openly, his colleagues concluded that he took this attitude out of sheer cowardice. They were convinced that there would be a repetition of the old story of hesitation and delays and endless quibbles over details, whereby he had thrown away a golden opportunity by not attacking at once, and instead had allowed his army to become stale and earned the enemy's contempt. The general feeling was therefore all on the side of Demosthenes, and Nicias was forced unwillingly to give way.

Accordingly, Demosthenes now launched a night attack with the infantry upon Epipolae. Some of the guards were surprised and killed in the first onslaught and those who resisted were routed. However, he did not halt there, but pushed on to the position held by the Boeotians. They were the first of the enemy to put themselves into battle order and, uttering their war-cry, they charged the Athenians with levelled spears and drove them back with heavy losses. At this point panic and confusion seized hold of the army. Some of the troops who had been victorious and were still advancing were overrun by others retreating from the front line. Those who were still marching up from Epipolae to the attack were pushed back and thrown into chaos by the fugitives streaming down in panic to the rear; they thought their retreating comrades were their pursuers and each force mistook the other for the enemy. The Athenians found themselves huddled together in utter disorder, and the terror and confusion of the fighting, coupled with the impossibility of distinguishing anything clearly, at first bewildered, and finally turned the tables on them. The night was neither completely dark nor yet afforded any steady light. The moon was low on the horizon and its feeble glow

was partly obscured by the outlines of innumerable armed figures moving back and forth, so as to render every shape indistinct and make men suspect their own comrades for fear of the enemy. It happened also that the Athenians were fighting with the moon behind them, so that their own shadows concealed their numbers and the glitter of their weapons, while the enemy, whose shields reflected the moonlight, appeared to be better armed and more numerous than they really were. At last the Athenian resistance broke, the enemy attacked them on all sides, and the retreat became a rout. Many were killed by the Syracusans, and not a few by their own comrades; some lost their footing on the cliffs, and others scattered and wandered about in the fields, where as soon as it was light they were cut down by the pursuing cavalry. The dead numbered 2,000 and of the survivors only a handful returned with their arms.

22. Nicias was appalled by the disaster, although he had half expected it, and he blamed Demosthenes for his foolhardiness. The latter defended himself on this score, but now pressed strongly for an immediate withdrawal. He argued that it was impossible to defeat the enemy with their present strength and they could certainly expect no more reinforcements. Even if they won a battle, they still ought to change their base and abandon a position which was generally agreed to be unhealthy for troops at any time, and was now particularly dangerous, as they could see, because of the season of the year. Autumn was setting in, many of the soldiers were already sick, and all had lost heart.

But this time it was Nicias who refused to retreat. This was not because he underrated the Syracusans, but because he was still more afraid of the Athenian people and of the accusations and trials which would follow at home. His reply was that he did not foresee any immediate danger, and that if this did arise he would rather meet his death at the hands of the enemy than of his fellow-citizens. He did not share the opinion of Leon[1] of Byzantium who was later to tell his compatriots, 'I would rather die at your hands than in your company.' Nicias added that the question of where they should move the camp could be decided at leisure. Demosthenes, in view of the failure of his earlier plan, did not press his point and the others assumed that if Nicias opposed an evacuation so vehemently, he must still have

1. Possibly in 340 B.C. when Philip of Macedon was besieging Byzantium. Leon was a rhetorician and a historian.

great confidence in his intelligence from inside the city, and so fell in with his opinion. But as events turned out the Syracusans received fresh reinforcements, while the sickness within the Athenian camp grew worse, until at last even Nicias recognized that they must move and gave the order to prepare for a general embarkation.

23. But at the very moment when all the preparations were complete and the enemy, not suspecting any move of this kind, were off their guard, there occurred a nocturnal eclipse of the moon. This terrified Nicias and those of his men who were sufficiently ignorant or superstitious to be disturbed by such a sight. Eclipses of the sun towards the end of the month were by this time understood even by the uneducated to be caused in some way or other by the shadow of the moon. But in the case of the moon, what it could be that crossed her path and caused her while she was at the full to lose her light and give off so many different colours, they found far more difficult to explain. They were convinced that it must be a supernatural portent and a warning from the gods that fearful calamities were at hand.

The first man to attempt to explain in writing the illumination and eclipse of the moon was Anaxagoras, and his account was the boldest and the most lucid of all. But this was a recent theory, nor did it enjoy much repute: in fact, it was still treated as a secret, confined to a small circle and only communicated with great caution rather than with confidence. Public opinion was instinctively hostile towards natural philosophers and visionaries, as they were called, since it was generally believed that they belittled the power of the gods by explaining it away as nothing more than the operation of irrational causes and blind forces acting by necessity. For this reason even Protagoras was driven into exile[1] and Anaxagoras imprisoned,[2] till Pericles managed to rescue him with great difficulty, while Socrates, although he had nothing whatever to do with this kind of speculation, was nevertheless put to death for his connexion with philosophy.[3] It was not until later that the glorious fame of Plato shone forth, and served, not only through the example of his life, but also through his teaching that the forces of nature are subject to a higher principle, to dispel the odium which had attached itself to such theories, thereby enabling them to circulate

1. 411 B.C.
2. 432 B.C.
3. 399 B.C.

freely. At any rate, Plato's friend Dion remained unperturbed, although an eclipse of the moon took place at the time when he was to embark at Zacynthus for his conspiracy against Dionysius,[1] and he continued his voyage to Syracuse, landed there, and drove out the tyrant.

It happened that at that moment, however, Nicias did not even have an experienced soothsayer with him. His former intimate associate, Stilbides, who had done much to hold his superstitious fears in check, had recently died. And, indeed, as Philochorus has pointed out, from the point of view of men engaged in an evacuation, the eclipse, so far from being a bad omen, was a positive advantage, since an operation of this kind, carried out under the fear of discovery, needs concealment above all else, while light is fatal to it. In any event the normal practice, as Autoclides mentions in his commentaries, was to delay action for no more than three days following an eclipse of the sun or moon. Nicias, however, persuaded the Athenians to wait for another whole cycle of the moon, as if he could not see that the planet had been purified of the darkness and restored to its normal brilliance, the moment it had passed out of the region which is overshadowed by the earth.

24. Nicias now became more and more oblivious of his other duties and completely absorbed in sacrifice and divination. All initiative passed to the enemy who steadily closed in upon him, investing his camp and defences with their land forces and encircling the harbour with their ships. Indeed, not only the Syracusan warships, but even boys in their fishing-boats rowed up to challenge and hurl insults at the Athenians. One of these, named Heraclides, the son of an aristocratic Syracusan family, ventured so close that an Athenian vessel started in pursuit and was on the point of capturing him. His uncle, Pollichus, saw his danger and sailed out to the rescue with ten triremes which he commanded, and other Syracusan ships came up to help Pollichus. A sharp action developed, in which the Syracusans finally prevailed and Eurymedon and many of his sailors were killed.

This episode brought the impatience of the Athenian troops to a head and they clamoured for their generals to begin an immediate withdrawal by land, for the Syracusans' first action after their victory was to block up the mouth of the harbour. Nicias, however, remained

1. 357 B.C.

immovable, because he could not face the total loss of his fleet of transports and nearly two hundred warships. He therefore selected the best of the infantry and a picked force of archers and javelin-throwers and embarked these on as many of his ships as he could man with rowers, 110 in all, for there were not enough oars for the rest. He then abandoned his main camp and the walls which connected it to the temple of Heracles and drew up the remainder of his troops along the shore. In consequence the Syracusans, who for many months had been prevented from offering their usual sacrifice to Heracles, now went up with their priests and generals to sacrifice while their ships were being manned.

25. Presently the diviners declared that the sacrifices promised a glorious victory, provided that the Syracusans did not seek battle, but remained on the defensive, for this was the way in which Heracles overcame his enemies, simply by defending himself when he was attacked. With this encouragement they put out from the shore.

Then began the last fight in the harbour, the greatest and most hotly contested action of the whole campaign, and one which excited as much anguish and passion among the spectators as in those who actually fought, for the battle took place in full view of the shore and passed through many unexpected shifts of fortune. The Athenians suffered as much from their own equipment and order of battle as from those of the enemy. They were fighting against light vessels which bore down upon them from several directions at once, while their own ships were heavy and huddled together. The Athenians were also bombarded with stones, which did equal damage at whatever angle they struck, while they could only reply with javelins and arrows, whose flight was upset by the tossing of the ships, so that they did not all hit their target with the point. The Syracusans had learned these tactical lessons from Ariston, the Corinthian pilot, who himself played a gallant part in this battle and was killed in the very hour of victory.

The Athenians were completely routed. They lost heavily in men and their last chance of escape at sea was now cut off. They saw, too, that their line of retreat by land was seriously threatened and they did not even try to hinder their enemies from towing away the ships which they had abandoned, nor did they ask for a truce to take up their dead. They were more distressed at the prospect of abandoning their

sick and wounded comrades, whom they saw all around them, than at leaving the dead unburied, and, indeed, the survivors who were still active now felt that their state was the worst of all, since it seemed that they had many more hardships to endure and yet must suffer the same fate in the end.

26. That very night they prepared to march. Meanwhile, Gylippus watched the Syracusans give themselves up to an evening of sacrifices and drinking to celebrate their victory and the festival of their national hero, Heracles. He knew that he could neither compel nor persuade them to cut short their festivities and attack the Athenians as they withdrew. But at this moment Hermocrates on his own initiative devised a scheme to deceive Nicias. He sent some trusted friends of his own, who pretended that they came from the party inside Syracuse with which Nicias had long been in secret correspondence, and they warned him not to set out that night, as the Syracusans had occupied the passes and set a number of ambushes for him. The trick worked and Nicias was outwitted. He delayed his start and so fell into the very trap he had hoped to avoid. The next morning the enemy were on the march before him, seized the defiles, blocked the fords of the rivers, destroyed the bridges, and sent out cavalry to patrol the open ground, so as to oppose the Athenians at every step as they retreated.

They therefore lay up and rested all that day and the following night. When they finally set out it was with tears and lamentations more like those of a population fleeing from their own city than leaving an enemy's country, so distressed were they at being forced to abandon their helpless friends and comrades and at their own desperate lack of the barest necessities. Yet even their present hardships seemed less terrible than the prospects which faced them. Of all the pitiable spectacles in the camp, none was sadder than that of their commander, emaciated by sickness and reduced, little as he deserved it, to a miserable diet at a time when his wasted body needed especial care. In spite of this he achieved and endured more than many of the strongest, and it was clear to all that he persisted in his duty not in his own interests, nor because he clung to life, but because for the sake of the men under his command he refused to give up hope. Others in their personal grief or terror might give way to tears and complaints, but Nicias, if he ever lamented, did so when he reflected upon the

final shame and failure of the expedition compared to the great and glorious successes he had once hoped to achieve. What perhaps moved his men most was not merely the sight of his distress, but the memory of the speeches and the warnings whereby he had done everything in his power to dissuade the Athenian people from the whole venture, and as they recalled these, they felt that his misfortunes were the least deserved of all. And when they considered that even so religious a man as Nicias, who had spared nothing in his observances and devotion to heaven, was confronted with a fate no better than that of the meanest and most humble wretch in the whole army, they were forced to despair of help from the gods.

27. In spite of this no man strove harder than Nicias by his tone of voice, his expression, and his bearing to show himself superior to his misfortunes. Throughout the march, although for eight days[1] his men were constantly shot at and wounded, he succeeded in keeping his force intact and undefeated, until the corps led by Demosthenes was captured. This part of the army, the rearguard, dropped behind as it fought its way along, and was encircled near the country estate of Polyzelus. Demosthenes drew his sword and fell on it, but the enemy quickly surrounded and seized him before he could kill himself. The Syracusans rode up and told Nicias what had happened, and he sent out a cavalry patrol which confirmed the news that Demosthenes' force had surrendered. Nicias then asked Gylippus for a truce whose terms would allow the Athenians to leave Sicily: in return he offered hostages as a guarantee that the Syracusans would be repaid all the money they had spent in the war.

The enemy ignored his offer. They retorted with threats and abuse and continued to shower their missiles upon him and his men, who were by now without even the barest necessities. Nicias still held out that night, and the next day, although shot at from every side, fought his way to the river Asinarus. There the enemy crowded his men to the banks and forced some of them into the water, while others, arriving ahead of the pursuit and tortured by thirst, leaped in of their own accord. There followed a terrible scene of carnage in the water itself, as the Athenians were slaughtered while they drank, until finally Nicias flung himself at Gylippus's feet, and cried out: 'Gylippus, have pity on us in your triumph. I do not ask this for myself: I have known

1. See also Thucydides, vii, 78–85.

glory and fame enough to bear such a change of fortune, but I appeal to you for my men's sake. Remember that the Athenians showed humanity to your countrymen when we were the victors, and that all men are subject to the chances of war.' Gylippus could not remain unmoved by these words nor by Nicias's appearance. He knew how, thanks to him, the Spartans had been well treated when the peace had been negotiated, and, besides, he regarded it as a personal triumph to bring home the Athenian generals as his prisoners. He therefore raised Nicias from the ground, spoke encouragingly to him, and ordered his troops to give quarter to the Athenians. However, the order was only passed on slowly, and in the meanwhile far more men were killed than taken prisoner, although some of the soldiers hid their captives from their officers.

At last the Syracusans collected all the acknowledged prisoners they could find and decorated the tallest and finest trees by the riverside with the Athenians' arms. Next they crowned themselves with wreaths and decked out their own horses superbly, while they cropped the manes and tails of their enemies' mounts and then marched in procession into the city. They had triumphed in the most brilliant campaign ever fought between Greeks, and by a prodigious display of courage and enterprise they had gained the most annihilating of victories.

28. Later the Syracusans summoned a meeting of their whole assembly attended by their allies. At this Eurycles, the popular leader, proposed first that the day on which Nicias had been captured should in future be kept as a religious festival and should be known as the Asinaria, after the river where the final surrender had taken place. This was on the twenty-sixth day of the month Carneius,[1] which the Athenians call Metageitnion. As for the prisoners, he moved that the Athenians' servants and their allies from Greece should be sold into slavery, while the free Athenians and the Sicilian Greeks who had fought with them should be imprisoned in the stone quarries, with the exception of the generals, who should be executed. The Syracusans were on the point of passing the decree, when Hermocrates rose to protest that it was more important to use a victory honourably than to win it, a speech which provoked a storm of disapproval in the assembly. And when Gylippus asked for the generals to be surrendered

1. About 20 September 413 B.C.

to him to be taken back alive to Sparta, the Syracusans, who had grown insolent and overbearing with success, attacked him violently. Even during the campaign, they had resented the harshness and Spartan rigour of his leadership, and according to Timaeus, they also accused him of meanness and greed. These weaknesses he was said to have inherited from his father, who had been exiled for accepting bribes. Gylippus himself later embezzled thirty out of the thousand talents which Lysander had sent by him to Sparta and hid them under the tiles of his house, but the theft was revealed by an informer, and he was forced to leave the country in disgrace. However, these events are recorded in greater detail in the life of Lysander.[1]

Timaeus does not agree with Thucydides and Philistus, according to whom Nicias and Demosthenes were put to death at the orders of the Syracusans. His version is that Hermocrates sent a message while the assembly was still sitting to warn them of their sentence, and that both generals committed suicide with the connivance of one of the guards. Their bodies were thrown outside the gates and exposed as a public spectacle. I am told that to this day a shield, said to belong to Nicias, can be seen in one of the temples of Syracuse. The outside shows a design of gold and purple, elaborately inlaid and interwoven.

29. Most of the Athenian prisoners perished in the quarries from sickness and from their wretched diet, for they were given no more than a pint of meal and a half pint of water a day. A number were stolen away and sold as slaves, or contrived to pass themselves off as servants and these men, when they were sold, were branded on the forehead with the figure of a horse. Indeed, there were actually some cases of free-born Athenians who had to submit to this humiliation besides their enslavement. However, these men soon found that their modesty and self-control stood them in good stead; some of them were quickly set free, while others who remained with their masters were treated with respect.

A few were rescued because of their knowledge of Euripides, for it seems that the Sicilians were more devoted to his poetry than any other Greeks living outside the mother country. Even the smallest fragments of his verses were learned from every stranger who set foot on the island, and they took delight in exchanging these quotations with one another. At any rate there is a tradition that many of the

1. *Lysander*, Chs. 16–17.

Athenian soldiers who returned home safely visited Euripides to thank him for their deliverance which they owed to his poetry. Some of them told him that they had been given their freedom in return for teaching their masters all they could remember of his works, while others, when they took to flight after the final battle, had been given food and water for reciting some of his lyrics. We need not be surprised then at the story of the ship from Caunus, which found itself pursued by pirates and made for the harbour of Syracuse. At first the Syracusans refused to let her enter; then later they asked the crew whether they knew any of Euripides' songs, and on learning that they did, gave them leave to bring in their vessel.

30. When the terrible story first reached Athens, it is said that the people could not believe it, especially because of the messenger who first broke the news. It appears that a stranger landed at the Piraeus, took a seat in a barber's chair and began to talk about the subject as if it were common knowledge. The barber listened to him, and then, before the traveller could tell anyone else, ran as fast as he could into the city and rushing up to the archons, blurted out the news in the open market-place. Naturally enough, this caused utter dismay, followed by an uproar, and so the magistrates immediately summoned the assembly and brought the barber before them. When he was cross-examined as to how he had heard the story, he could give no satisfactory account and so was promptly condemned as a rumour-monger and public agitator. He was fastened to the wheel and tortured, until other messengers arrived who reported the disaster in all its details. In this way Nicias's warnings were believed at last, but only after he himself had suffered the fate which he had so often prophesied to his fellow-countrymen.

8

ALCIBIADES

[c. 450 – 404 B.C.]

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TRADITION has it that Alcibiades' family was founded by Eurysaces,[1] the son of Ajax. His mother was Deinomache, the daughter of Megacles, and on her side he was descended from the house of Alcmaeon. His father Cleinias fitted out a warship at his own expense and fought brilliantly in the sea battle at Artemisium.[2] He was later killed at Coronea in Tolmides'[3] ill-fated campaign against the Boeotians, and Alcibiades was brought up as the ward of Xanthippus's two sons, Pericles and Ariphron, who were closely related to him.

It has been justly remarked that Alcibiades' fame owes a great deal to the kindness and friendship shown him by Socrates. For example Nicias, Demosthenes, Lamachus, Phormio, Thrasybulus, and Theramenes were all famous men in Alcibiades' time, and yet we do not so much as know the name of the mother of any of them, while in Alcibiades' case we even know that his nurse was a Spartan woman called Amycla and his tutor was Zopyrus. The first of these details has been recorded by Antisthenes and the second by Plato.[4]

As for Alcibiades' physical beauty, we need say no more than that it flowered at each season of his growth in turn, and lent him an extraordinary grace and charm, alike as a boy, a youth, and a man. Euripides' saying that even the autumn of beauty possesses a loveliness of its own is not universally true. But if it applies to few others, it was certainly true of Alcibiades on account of his natural gifts and his physical perfection. Even his lisp is said to have suited his voice well

1. Plato, *Alcibiades I*, 121–2.
2. 480 B.C.
3. See *Pericles*, Ch. 18. The battle of Coronea was fought in 447 B.C.
4. *Alcibiades I*, 121.

and to have made his talk persuasive and full of charm. Aristophanes refers to it in the passage where he mocks Theorus,[1] whose name was a byword for cowardice:[2]

> Sosias: Then Alcibiades said to me with that lisp of his
> 'Look at Theowus, what a cwaven's head he has.'
> Xanthias: He never lisped a truer word than that.

And Archippus, when he makes fun of Alcibiades' son, says, 'He goes mincing along, trailing his long robe behind him, trying to look the image of his father', and again, 'He tilts his head to one side and overdoes his lisp.'

2. In later life Alcibiades' character was to reveal many changes and inconsistencies, as one might expect in a career such as his, which was spent in the midst of great enterprises and shifts of fortune. He was a man of many strong passions, but none of them was stronger than the desire to challenge others and gain the upper hand over his rivals. This is illustrated well enough by the stories which are told of his boyhood.

Once, when he was hard pressed in wrestling, rather than allow himself to be thrown, he set his teeth in his opponent's arms as they gripped him and held on so hard he would have bitten through them. The other let go his hold and cried out, 'Alcibiades, you bite like a woman!' 'No, like a lion,' was his reply.

On another occasion, while he was still a small boy, he was playing knucklebones in the narrow street, and just when his turn came to throw, a loaded waggon was passing. First of all he ordered the driver to stop, as his dice had fallen right in the path of the dray, but the driver stolidly took no notice and urged on his horses. The other boys then scattered out of the way, but Alcibiades flung himself down on his face directly in front of the team, stretched out at full length and told the man to drive on if he wanted to. Upon this the driver took fright and reined in his horses, and the spectators were seized with panic, too, and ran up shouting to help the boy.

When he came to study, he was fairly obedient to most of his teachers, but refused to learn the flute, which he regarded as an ignoble

1. *Wasps*, 44 ff.

2. There is a pun on the Greek words *korax* (raven) and *kolax* (coward) which cannot properly be rendered in English.

accomplishment and quite unsuitable for a free citizen. He argued that to use a plectrum and play the lyre does not disfigure a gentleman's bearing or appearance, but once a man starts blowing into a flute, his own friends can scarcely recognize his features. Besides, the lyre accompanies and creates a harmony for the words or the song of its performer, but the flute seals and barricades his mouth and deprives him both of voice and of speech. 'Leave the flute to the sons of Thebes,' he concluded, 'for they have no idea of conversation. We Athenians, as our fathers say, have Athena for our foundress and Apollo for our patron, one of whom threw away the flute in disgust, while the other stripped the skin off the man who played it!'[1] In this way, half in jest and half in earnest, he not only avoided learning the instrument himself, but induced the other boys to do the same. The word soon went round that Alcibiades detested flute-playing and made fun of everybody who learned it, and with good reason, too. In consequence the flute disappeared from the number of so-called liberal accomplishments and came to be utterly despised.

3. When Alcibiades was a boy, according to one of the malicious stories which Antiphon has circulated, he ran away from home to Democrates, one of his admirers, whereupon his guardian Ariphron wanted to have it proclaimed by the town-crier that he had disappeared. But Pericles refused. 'If he is dead,' he said, 'we shall only know the news a day sooner, and if he is alive it will be a reproach to him for the rest of his life.' Antiphon also alleges that Alcibiades killed one of his attendants by striking him with a club at Sibyrtius's wrestling school. However we need not give any credit to these stories, coming as they do from a man who has openly admitted that he abuses Alcibiades out of personal dislike.

4. It was not long before Alcibiades was surrounded and pursued by many admirers of high rank. Most of them were plainly captivated by the brilliance of his youthful beauty and courted him on this account. But it was the love which Socrates bore him which gave the strongest proof of the boy's natural virtue and goodness of disposition. He saw that these qualities were innate in Alcibiades, as well as being

1. Athena is said to have thrown away the flute on seeing the unflattering effect on her features mirrored in a spring. Apollo defeated Marsyas in a musical contest and flayed him alive.

radiantly embodied in his physical appearance. At the same time he feared the influence upon him, not merely of wealth and rank, but of the crowd of Athenians, foreigners, and men from the allied cities, who vied for his affections with flatteries and favours, and he therefore took it upon himself to protect Alcibiades and ensure that the fruit of such a fine plant should not be spoiled and wasted while it was still in flower. No man is so surrounded and lapped about by fortune with the so-called good things of life that he is completely out of reach of philosophy, or cannot be stung by its mordant and outspoken questions, and so it proved with Alcibiades. Even though he was pampered from the very beginning by companions who would say nothing but what they thought would please him, and hindered from listening to anybody who would advise or discipline him, yet because of his innate virtues, he recognized Socrates' worth, attached himself to him, and rejected his rich and famous lovers. Soon, as he came to know Socrates and listened to the words of a lover who neither pursued unmanly pleasures nor asked for kisses and embraces, but constantly sought to point out his weaknesses and put down his empty and foolish conceit:

> The cock crouched down like a slave
> And let its feathers droop.

And he came to the conclusion that the role Socrates played was really part of a divine dispensation to watch over and rescue the young. In this way by disparaging himself, admiring his friend, loving that friend's kindness towards him and revering his virtues, he unconsciously formed what Plato calls[1] 'an image of love to match love'. Everyone was amazed to see him taking his meals and his exercise with Socrates and sharing his tent,[2] while he remained harsh and unaccommodating towards the rest of his lovers. Some of them, in fact, he treated with the greatest insolence, as happened in the case of Anytus, the son of Anthemion.

This man, who was one of Alcibiades' admirers, was entertaining some guests to dinner and invited Alcibiades among them. Alcibiades refused the invitation, but that night he got drunk at home with a number of his friends and led a riotous procession to Anytus's house. He stood at the door of the room in which the guests were being

1. *Phaedrus*, 255.
2. See also Plato, *Symposium*, 219e.

entertained, and there he noticed a great many gold and silver cups on the tables. He told his slaves to take half of these and carry them home for him; then he went off to his own house, without even deigning to enter the room. The guests were furious and declared that he had insulted Anytus outrageously. 'On the contrary, I think he has behaved quite reasonably, you might even say considerately,' was Anytus's comment. 'He could have taken everything; but at least he has left us half.'

5. This was how he treated the rest of his lovers. But there was one exception, a man who was a resident alien, as they were called. He was by no means rich, but he sold everything he possessed, brought the hundred staters he had got for his property to Alcibiades and begged him to accept them. Alcibiades was delighted at this, burst out laughing, and invited him to dinner. After entertaining him and showing him every hospitality, he gave him back the money and told him that the next day he must go to the market, where the public revenues were put up for auction, and outbid the speculators. The man protested, because a bid required a capital sum of many talents, but Alcibiades threatened to have him beaten if he did not agree, for he evidently had some private grudge against the tax-farmers. So next morning the alien went to the public auction and bid a talent higher than the usual figure for the public revenues. Upon this, the tax-farmers crowded around him angrily and demanded that he should name his guarantor, expecting that he would be unable to find one. The man was thrown into confusion and was on the point of backing out, when Alcibiades, standing in the distance, called out to the magistrates, 'You can put my name down, he is a friend of mine: I guarantee him.' When the contractors heard this, they were at their wits' end, as their usual practice was to pay the amount due for the current year out of the profits of the preceding one. They could see no way out, and so they began to press the man to withdraw his bid and offered him money to do so, but Alcibiades would not allow him to accept less than a talent. As soon as they offered that amount he told him to take it and withdraw. This was the service that Alcibiades did him.

6. Socrates' love for him had many powerful rivals, and yet because of Alcibiades' innate good qualities it somehow prevailed over all

other attachments, so that his teacher's words took hold of him, wrung his heart, and moved him to tears. But there were times when he would surrender himself to his flatterers, who promised him all kinds of pleasures, and he would give Socrates the slip and then allow himself actually to be hunted down by him like a runaway slave. It was Socrates alone whom he feared and respected; all the rest of his lovers he despised.

Cleanthes the philosopher once remarked that anybody whom he loved must be 'thrown', as a wrestler would say, by means of words alone, though rival lovers might be allowed other holds, which he himself would scorn to use, meaning by this the various lusts of the body. Certainly Alcibiades was carefree and easily led into pleasure; that lawless self-indulgence in his daily life, which Thucydides mentions,[1] gives reason to suspect this. But the weakness which his tempters played upon most of all was his love of distinction and his desire for fame, and in this way they pressed him into embarking on ambitious projects before he was ready for them; they assured him that once he entered public life he would not merely eclipse the other generals and politicians, but even surpass the power and prestige which Pericles had enjoyed in the eyes of the Greeks. But just as iron that has been softened in the fire is hardened again by cold water and its particles forced closely together, so whenever Socrates found his pupil puffed up with vanity and the life of pleasure, he deflated him and rendered him humble and submissive, and Alcibiades was compelled to learn how many his defects were and how far he fell short of perfection.

7. Once, when he was past his boyhood, he went to a schoolmaster and asked him for a volume of Homer. When the teacher said that he had none of Homer's works, Alcibiades struck him with his fist and went off. Another teacher said that he had a copy of Homer which he had corrected himself. 'What,' Alcibiades exclaimed, 'are you teaching boys to read when you know how to edit Homer? Why aren't you teaching young men?'

On another occasion when he wished to speak to Pericles he went to his house, but was told Pericles could not receive him, as he was considering how to present his accounts to the people. 'Would it not be better,' asked Alcibiades as he came away, 'if he considered how to avoid presenting accounts to the people at all?'

1. vi, 15.

While he was still in his teens he served in the Potidaean campaign,[1] in which he shared a tent with Socrates and took his place next to him in the ranks. There was a fierce battle, in which they both fought with great courage, but when Alcibiades was wounded and fell, it was Socrates who stood over his body and defended him with the most conspicuous bravery and saved his life and his arms from the enemy. The prize for valour was certainly due in all justice to Socrates, but because of the distinction of Alcibiades' name, the generals were evidently anxious to award it to him. Accordingly, Socrates, who wanted to encourage his friend's honourable ambitions, took the lead in testifying to Alcibiades' bravery and in pressing for the crown and the suit of armour to be given to him.

On another occasion, when the battle of Delium had been lost[2] and the Athenian army routed, Alcibiades, who was then on horseback, caught sight of Socrates with a few other soldiers retreating on foot. He would not ride on, but stayed to escort him, although the enemy were pressing hard and killing many of the Athenians. These events, of course, all belong to a later date.

8. Callias's father Hipponicus was a man who enjoyed great prestige in Athens, on account both of his family and of his wealth, and Alcibiades once struck him a blow with his fist, not because of any quarrel with him or even out of anger, but simply because he had agreed with some friends to do it as a joke. Very soon the whole of Athens had heard of the outrage and naturally enough it aroused great indignation. Early the next morning Alcibiades went to Hipponicus's house and knocked at the door. When he was shown in, he took off his cloak and offered his body to Hipponicus to beat and punish as he chose. But Hipponicus put aside his anger and forgave him, and afterwards gave Alcibiades his daughter Hipparete to marry.

There is another story that it was not Hipponicus, but Callias his son, who betrothed Hipparete to Alcibiades and gave her a dowry of ten talents, and that later, when she had a child, Alcibiades extorted a further ten talents from him, making out that this had been the agreement if children were born to them. After this Callias became so afraid that Alcibiades would intrigue against him to get his money, that he gave public notice that in the event of his dying without heirs

1. 432–431 B.C.
2. 424 B.C.

of his own, his house and his property would be bequeathed to the State.

Hipparete was a virtuous and affectionate wife, but she was outraged by the liaisons her husband continually carried on with Athenian and foreign courtesans, and finally she left his house and went to live with her brother. Alcibiades paid no attention to this and continued his debaucheries, so that she was obliged to lodge her petition for divorce with the magistrate, which she did, not by proxy but in person. When she appeared in public for this purpose, as the law demanded, Alcibiades came up, seized her and carried her home with him through the market-place, and not a soul dared to oppose him or take her from him. In fact she continued to live with him until her death, for she died not long after this, while Alcibiades was on a voyage to Ephesus. I should explain that this violence of his was not regarded as being either inhuman or contrary to the law. Indeed, it would appear that the law, in laying it down that the wife who wishes to separate from her husband must attend the court in person, is actually designed to give the husband the opportunity to meet her and recover her.

9. Alcibiades owned an exceptionally large and handsome dog, which he had bought for seventy minae, and it possessed an extremely fine tail, which he had cut off. His friends scolded him and told him that everyone was angry for the dog's sake. Alcibiades only laughed and retorted, 'That is exactly what I wanted. I am quite content for the whole of Athens to chatter about this; it will stop them saying anything worse about me.'

10. His first appearance in public life, it is said, was not an occasion he had planned, but it was connected quite by chance with a voluntary subscription to the state. Alcibiades was passing the Assembly at a moment when there was a sudden burst of loud applause, and he asked what was the cause of the excitement. When he heard that a public subscription was in progress, he went up to the platform and offered a contribution himself. The crowd clapped their hands and cheered with delight, so much so that Alcibiades forgot about a quail which he happened to be carrying under his cloak, and the bird took fright and flew away. At this the people shouted all the louder and many of them jumped up to help chase the bird. The man who finally

caught it and returned it to him was Antiochus,[1] the pilot, who as a result of this episode later became a close friend of Alcibiades.

Because of Alcibiades' birth, his wealth, and his personal courage in battle, every door to a public career stood open to him. But although he attracted many friends and followers, he counted above all else on his charm as a speaker to give him a hold over the people. And in fact not only do the comic poets testify that he was a most effective speaker, but the greatest orator Athens ever knew, Demosthenes, refers to Alcibiades in his speech *Against Meidias*, as a man who spoke with extraordinary power, in addition to his other gifts. If we can believe Theophrastus, who is the most diligent in research and the best informed in historical matters of all the philosophers, Alcibiades possessed in a higher degree than any of his contemporaries the faculty of discerning and grasping what was required in a given situation. However, as he strove to find not merely the right thing to say, but also the proper words and phrases in which to clothe his thoughts, and as he did not have a large command of vocabulary, he would often hesitate in the middle of his speech, and even stop dead and pause while the necessary phrase eluded him, and then he would start again with great caution.

11. The horses he bred were famous in every country, and so was the number of his racing chariots. Nobody but Alcibiades, neither king nor private citizen, ever entered seven of these at the Olympic games. And to have won with them the first, second, and fourth prizes, as Thucydides says, and the third, too, according to Euripides, is an achievement so magnificent that it scarcely leaves further room for ambition in this field. Euripides celebrates his success in this ode:

> Son of Cleinias, yours is the name I sing.
> Victory shines like a star, but yours eclipses all victories:
> What man or hero in all the lands of Greece
> Ever triumphed first, second, and third in the chariot race,
> Stepped from the course unwearied and crowned with the olive of Zeus,
> And heard his name three times acclaimed in the herald's cry?

12. His success at Olympia was made all the more brilliant by the way in which the various cities vied with each other to do him hon-

1. See also Ch. 35.

our. The people of Ephesus erected a magnificently decorated tent for him, Chios supplied fodder for his horses and a large number of animals for sacrifice, while Lesbos presented him with wine and other provisions which allowed him to entertain lavishly. And in the midst of all this rivalry another episode occurred: we do not know whether Alcibiades was falsely accused of what happened or was genuinely guilty of sharp practice, but in any case the affair served to bring him even more conspicuously into the public eye.

The story is that there was at Athens a certain Diomedes, a respectable man and a friend of Alcibiades, who was keenly ambitious to win a victory at Olympia. He discovered that there was a racing chariot at Argos which was the property of the city and as he knew that Alcibiades had many friends and was extremely influential there, he persuaded him to buy it. Alcibiades made the purchase for his friend, but then entered the chariot for the race as his own and told Diomedes he could do what he liked about it. Diomedes was furious and called upon gods and men to witness how he had been cheated. It seems that this affair also gave rise to a lawsuit and that Isocrates wrote a speech *On the team of horses* for Alcibiades' son. In this speech, however, the plaintiff referred to is not Diomedes but Tisias.

13. When Alcibiades entered public life he was still scarcely more than a boy, but he quickly proved himself more than a match for the leading men of both parties, with the exception of Phaeax, the son of Erasistratus, and Nicias, the son of Niceratus, who became his chief rivals. Nicias was already of mature years and enjoyed a very high reputation as a general. Phaeax, on the other hand, like Alcibiades, was just beginning his career, and although he, too, came of a distinguished family, he was less gifted than Alcibiades in many ways, particularly as a public speaker. He was regarded as an amiable man, who was better at making his views felt in conversation than at holding his own in debate. In fact he was, as Eupolis puts it:

> The best of talkers and the worst of speakers.

A speech written by Phaeax against Alcibiades has come down to us, in which it is alleged, among other things, that Alcibiades regularly used the city's many ceremonial vessels of gold and silver at his table as if they were his own.

There was at Athens a man named Hyperbolus belonging to the

deme of Perithoidae, whom Thucydides[1] mentions as a worthless character and who provided every one of the comic poets with endless material for jokes in their plays. Abuses, however, meant nothing to him; he was completely insensitive to it because of his contempt for public opinion. Some people call this determination or courage, though in fact it is nothing but shamelessness and moral indifference. Nobody liked him, but the people often made use of him when they wanted to slander or humiliate men of high position. At the moment I am speaking of, the Athenians, at Hyperbolus's instigation, were about to take a vote of ostracism. They employ this measure from time to time in order to cripple and drive out any man whose power and reputation in the city may have risen to exceptional heights, and in doing so they are governed by envy rather than by fear. When it became evident that the ostracism would fall upon one of three men, either Phaeax, Alcibiades, or Nicias, Alcibiades had a conference with Nicias, combined their two parties, and diverted the vote of ostracism against Hyperbolus.

According to some accounts, however, it was not with Nicias but with Phaeax that Alcibiades made this pact and secured the support of his party and the banishment of Hyperbolus, who could never have foreseen what was going to happen. Up to that time the ostracism had never been inflicted on any mean or insignificant individual, as Plato the comic dramatist has said, referring to Hyperbolus,

> The man deserved his fate, deny it who can:
> Yes, but the fate did not deserve the man.
> Not for the like of him and his slave brands
> Did Athens put the sherd into our hands.

However, I have set forth at greater length elsewhere the facts which have come to light concerning this affair.[2]

14. It caused Alcibiades great annoyance to see that Nicias was as much admired by the enemies of Athens as he was by his own fellow citizens. For in spite of the fact that Alcibiades was resident consul for Sparta at Athens and had looked after the interests of their men who had been captured at Pylos, the Spartans felt that it was mainly due to Nicias that they had secured peace terms and the return of their

1. viii, 73.
2. *Nicias*, Ch. 11.

prisoners, and so they paid all their court to him. Besides it was common talk throughout Greece that the man who had started the war was Pericles, but that it was Nicias who had ended it, and the peace was generally known as the peace of Nicias. Alcibiades was vexed beyond measure at his rival's success and out of sheer jealousy began to plot a way of violating the treaty. He saw, in the first place, that the Argives hated and feared the Spartans and wished to break away from them, so he secretly encouraged them to hope for an alliance with Athens, and in various conversations with the leaders of the popular party at Argos he urged them not to be afraid of the Spartans nor to make any concessions to them: they should look to Athens and wait for her to act, as the Athenians had by now reached the point of regretting that they had made peace at all and would soon break it.

Again when the Spartans made a separate alliance with the Thebans and handed over Panactum to the Athenians, not intact as had been laid down in the treaty, but with the walls dismantled, Alcibiades took advantage of the Athenians' anger to exasperate them still further. He stirred up the Assembly against Nicias and brought various slanders against him, which contained enough truth to make them plausible. He said that when Nicias was in command he had hung back from capturing the enemy's troops, who had been cut off on the island of Sphacteria; and then after others had succeeded in capturing them, he had set them free and sent them home simply to curry favour with the Spartans. But in spite of being such a staunch friend of the Spartans, he had not discouraged them from making a separate alliance with the Boeotians or the Corinthians. On the other hand, whenever any Greek state wanted to become the friend or the ally of Athens, he tried to prevent it, if such a step did not happen to please the Spartans.

This line of argument placed Nicias in a very difficult position. But at that moment, by a stroke of good fortune, a delegation arrived from Sparta. They brought with them reasonable proposals for opening negotiations and announced that they came with full powers to accept any additional terms which offered a fair compromise. The Council welcomed them and the people were to hold a meeting of the Assembly the following day to receive them. Alcibiades was alarmed at the prospect of their succeeding and contrived to arrange an interview with them in private. When they met, he said to them, 'What has come over you, men of Sparta? You surely know that the

Council always behaves reasonably and courteously to anybody who appears before it, but the Assembly stands on its dignity and expects important concessions. If you tell them that you have come here with unlimited powers, they will have no scruples in putting pressure on you and trying to dictate conditions. So you must really not be so naive. If you want to get moderate terms from the Athenians and not be forced into going further than you are prepared, you should discuss with them what would be a fair settlement in principle, but not let them know that you have full powers to accept it. You can count on my full support as a friend of Sparta.' After this speech he gave them his oath and in this way completely detached them from Nicias's influence. For their part, they trusted him implicitly and could only admire him as a man of extraordinary adroitness and intelligence.

On the following day the Assembly met and the ambassadors were presented to them. Alcibiades asked them politely in what capacity they had been sent, to which they replied that they had not come with full powers. He then immediately changed his tone and attacked them furiously, as though he and not they were the injured party, and proceeded to denounce them as liars and opportunists who had no genuine mission in Athens at all. The Council was indignant, the Assembly was furious, and Nicias, who knew nothing of the deceitful trick which had been played on him, was dumbfounded and put to shame by the ambassadors' change of front.

15. After the Spartans had been dismissed in this fashion, Alcibiades was appointed general and promptly secured Argos, Mantinea, and Elis as allies of Athens.[1] Nobody liked the way in which he brought this about, but it was nevertheless a political stroke of the first importance. It shook almost all the states of the Peloponnese and set them against one another. It marshalled in a single day a great host of shields against the Spartans at Mantinea,[2] and it shifted the scene of the conflict, with all its attendant dangers, so far away from Athens that even when the Spartans were victorious their success brought them no decisive advantage, whereas a defeat on this occasion would have endangered Sparta's very existence.

After this battle at Mantinea the aristocratic party in Argos, known as 'The Thousand', immediately set themselves to overthrow the

1. 420 B.C.
2. 418 B.C.

democrats and make themselves masters of the city, and with the help of the Spartans the democratic regime was abolished. However, the people took up arms again and got the upper hand,[1] and afterwards Alcibiades arrived and helped to consolidate their victory. He persuaded the Argives to build Long Walls and so, by joining their city to the sea, to make it dependent on the sea-power of Athens. He even went so far as to bring carpenters and stone-masons from Athens, and the enthusiasm he showed gained as much good will for himself as for his city. In the same way he persuaded the people of Patras to join their city to the sea with long walls.[2] When somebody warned them that the Athenians would swallow them up, Alcibiades retorted, 'Perhaps so, but at least it will be by degrees and feet first. Sparta would swallow you head first at one gulp!'

At the same time he advised the Athenians not to neglect their interest on land, but to put into practice the oath which the young soldiers take at the sanctuary of Agraulus. There they swear that they will regard barley, wheat, the vine, and the olive as the natural frontiers of Attica, and in this way they are taught to think of the whole of the habitable and fruitful earth as their own.

16. In the midst of this display of statesmanship, eloquence, cleverness, and exalted ambition, Alcibiades lived a life of prodigious luxury, drunkenness, debauchery, and insolence. He was effeminate in his dress and would walk through the market-place trailing his long purple robes, and he spent extravagantly. He had the decks of his triremes cut away to allow him to sleep more comfortably, and his bedding was slung on cords, rather than spread on the hard planks. He had a golden shield made for him, which was emblazoned not with any ancestral device, but with the figure of Eros armed with a thunderbolt.[3] The leading men of Athens watched all this with disgust and indignation and they were deeply disturbed by his contemptuous and lawless behaviour, which seemed to them monstrous and suggested the habits of a tyrant. The people's feelings towards him have been very aptly expressed by Aristophanes in the line:

1. 417 B.C.

2. 419 B.C.

3 Both cities and individuals sometimes displayed heraldic devices, the most common figures at Athens being those of Athena, the owl, and the olive. Only persons of standing were allowed to exhibit blazons and then only after they had performed some exceptional action.

They long for him, they hate him, they cannot do without him, and again, still more emphatically, in the guise of a metaphor:

> Better not bring up a lion inside your city,
> But if you must, then humour all his moods.[1]

The fact was that his voluntary donations, the public shows he supported, his unrivalled munificence to the state, the fame of his ancestry, the power of his oratory and his physical strength and beauty, together with his experience and prowess in war, all combined to make the Athenians forgive him everything else, and they were constantly finding euphemisms for his lapses and putting them down to youthful high spirits and honourable ambition. For example, he once locked up Agatharchus the artist in his house until he had decorated it with paintings for him, and then let him go with a handsome present, and he boxed the ears of Taureas who was presenting a chorus in competition with him, so anxious was Alcibiades to win the prize. On another occasion he chose a woman from among the prisoners taken at Melos[2] to be his mistress and brought up the child he had by her. People called this an example of his good nature, but in fact Alcibiades bore a heavy share of the responsibility for the execution of all the grown men on the island, since he had given his support in the Assembly to the motion which decreed this.

When Aristophon painted an allegorical picture which showed Nemea[3] embracing Alcibiades, people were delighted and came in crowds to look at it. But the older generation were offended at this, too; they thought it a sight fit only for a tyrant's court and an insult to the laws of Athens, and Archestratus was evidently speaking very much to the point when he said that Greece could not find room for more than one Alcibiades.

Timon the misanthrope once saw Alcibiades, who had made a successful speech in the Assembly, being escorted home, and this time he did not get out of the way or avoid him as was his custom with other people, but came up to him, took him by the hand, and said, 'You

1. *The Frogs*, 1425, 1431–2.

2. This small island revolted in 416 B.C. and the Athenians decided to make an example of it. The adult males were all executed and the rest of the population sold into slavery. Thucydides (v, 116) depicts this decision as one of the actions which were to bring retribution on Athens.

3. A personification of the district in the Peloponnese, where there was a famous athletic festival, at which Alcibiades had been victorious.

are doing well, my boy! Go on like this and you will soon be big enough to ruin the lot of them.' Some people laughed at this remark, while others abused him, but there were others again upon whom it made a deep impression. All this suggests how difficult public opinion found it to judge Alcibiades, because of the extreme inconsistency of his character.

17. Even in Pericles' lifetime the Athenians had already cast longing eyes upon Sicily, and after his death they went further and tried to lay their hands on it. From time to time they sent aid or auxiliary forces on a small scale, on the pretext of rescuing their allies there from being oppressed by the Syracusans, and they regarded these operations as the stepping-stones to a major expedition. But it was Alcibiades who finally fanned their desires into flame and persuaded them to abandon these piecemeal attempts, sail out to Sicily and try to subdue the island completely by means of an invasion on the grand scale. The hopes he aroused among the Athenians were great enough, but his own were even more ambitious, for while others regarded Sicily as the final objective of the expedition, to him it was no more than a spring-board for further conquests. So while Nicias was trying to dissuade the people from attempting to capture Syracuse because the task was too difficult for them, Alcibiades was dreaming of Carthage and Libya, and after that of investing Italy and the Peloponnese; indeed, he regarded Sicily as hardly more than a supply base for the war elsewhere. He succeeded at once in capturing the imagination of the young men with these prospects, while their seniors, too, could be heard enlarging on the wonders of the expedition, and people sat about in the wrestling-schools and the public meeting-places sketching in the sand the outline of Sicily and the position of Libya and Carthage.

However, we are told that Socrates the philosopher and Meton the astrologer did not believe that any good would come to the city from this venture. Socrates may have received a premonition of the future from his familiar guardian spirit. Meton, whether his misgivings arose from mature consideration or from some process of divination, pretended to be mad, snatched up a firebrand, and made as if to set fire to his house. However, some people say that there was no pretence of madness in Meton's case, but that he actually did burn down his house in the night and next morning appeared before the people with the plea that his son should be released from the expedition because of

this misfortune. At any rate he succeeded in hoodwinking his fellow-citizens and getting what he asked for.

18. Nicias was elected general much against his will; but what made him still more anxious to avoid the command was the appointment of Alcibiades as a colleague, for the Athenians reckoned that the war would be better conducted if they did not allow Alcibiades complete freedom but tempered his audacity with Nicias's caution. Besides, the third general, Lamachus, although well advanced in years, was considered to be quite as much of a firebrand in military matters as Alcibiades and equally adventurous in battle. When the size and the character of the armament for the expedition were debated, Nicias again tried to oppose the whole project and put a stop to the campaign. But Alcibiades countered his arguments and carried all before him, and afterwards Demostratus the orator formally moved that the generals should be given absolute authority over the equipping of the expedition and the conduct of the war.

After the people had passed this motion and everything was ready for the fleet to sail, a number of unlucky omens occurred, especially in connexion with the festival which was being held at that moment. This was the feast of Adonis, and in many parts of the city the women were carrying about little images which looked like dead men being taken out for burial, and at the same time they imitated funeral rites and beat their breasts and sang dirges. Besides this the mutilation of the Hermae in a single night, when almost all of them had their extremities disfigured, had deeply disturbed many people, even those who normally pay little attention to such things. A story was put about that it was the work of the Corinthians – Syracuse being a colony of theirs – who were hoping that the Athenians might be influenced by these portents to delay the expedition or even call it off. But the people paid little attention to this report or to those who refused to see anything ominous in the affair at all, but put it down to the usual effects of strong wine on disorderly young men, who start with a mere escapade and are easily led on to commit an outrage. Instead, the great majority responded to it with rage and fear and believed that it was part of a daring conspiracy which aimed at far higher matters. Every suspicious circumstance was closely investigated and both the Council and the Assembly held many meetings for this purpose within a few days.

19. During this period Androcles, the democratic leader, produced a number of slaves and resident aliens, who accused Alcibiades and his friends of having disfigured other sacred images and parodied the Mysteries of Eleusis in one of their drunken revels. They said that one Theodorus took the part of the Herald, Pulytion of the Torch-bearer and Alcibiades of the High Priest, and that the rest of his friends attended as initiates and were addressed as Mystae. These were the charges set out in the indictment which Thessalus, the son of Cimon, introduced into the Assembly, and in which he impeached Alcibiades for impiety towards the goddesses of Eleusis. The people by now were in an ugly mood and their anger turned against Alcibiades, while Androcles, who was his mortal enemy, added fuel to the flames. At first Alcibiades was seriously alarmed. But he soon discovered that all the soldiers and sailors who were about to embark for Sicily were on his side, and also that the force of 1,000 Argive and Mantinean infantry had openly declared that it was only on Alcibiades' account they were going to cross the sea and fight in a distant land, and that if he were treated unfairly they would immediately withdraw from the expedition. So he took heart again and insisted that he should be allowed to defend himself there and then before the people. It was now his enemies' turn to be discouraged, since they feared that the people might judge him too leniently just because they needed him so badly.

They therefore arranged that certain orators who were not known to be ill-disposed towards him – but who really detested him no less than his acknowledged enemies – should get up in the Assembly and say that it was an absurd procedure to appoint a general with absolute powers over so large a force and then, just when his expedition and allies were all assembled, cause him to lose his opportunity through the formalities of drawing lots for jurors and appointing times for the hearing of the case. 'He ought to sail now,' they said, 'and good luck go with him. When the campaign is finished, then let him come back and defend himself. The laws will be just the same then.'

Alcibiades was not blind to the malice which lay behind this postponement of the trial. He protested in the Assembly that it was monstrous for him to be sent out to command such a great force while his case was still in suspense, and to be obliged to leave these accusations and slanders hanging over his head. He argued that if he could not clear himself of the charges, then he ought to be put to death, but

that if he succeeded and proved himself innocent, then he should be allowed to proceed against the enemy without any fear of the informers at home.

20. However, he failed to convince the Athenians, but was given his sailing orders and put to sea with his colleagues.[1] They had under their command a fleet of nearly 140 triremes, 5,100 infantry, about 1,300 archers, slingers, and light-armed troops and the rest of their equipment in proportion. They arrived in Italy and captured Rhegium, and thereupon Alcibiades proposed a plan for the whole campaign. Nicias opposed it, but Lamachus gave his support and so Alcibiades sailed to Sicily. He succeeded in winning over Catana, but he achieved nothing more, as soon after this he was recalled by the Athenians to stand his trial.

At first, as I have said, nothing more than vague suspicions and slanders had been launched against Alcibiades by a number of slaves and resident aliens. Then, once he was out of the way, his enemies attacked him more vigorously. They contrived to link the outrages committed against the Hermae with the affair of the Mysteries, making out that they were both part of a general conspiracy to overthrow the government, so that anybody accused of any connexion with either was imprisoned without trial. The people now felt angry with themselves for not having tried Alcibiades and secured judgement against him on such serious charges at the time of the offence, and any relative, or friend or associate of his who fell foul of them while their fury lasted suffered exceedingly harsh treatment. Thucydides has omitted to give us the names of the informers, but others mention them as being Diocleides and Teucer. Phrynichus, the comic poet, for example, referred to them in these lines:

> Take care, my dearest Hermes, not to fall
> And break your marble nose, for then, the worst of all,
> If you get hurt, occasion may arise
> For another Diocleides to tell lies!

and Hermes replies:

> I will; I certainly have no inclination
> To reward Teucer for his information,
> That blood-soaked alien.

1. July 415 B.C.

And yet the evidence given by the informers contained no solid or established facts. One of them, indeed, when he was asked how he recognized the faces of the mutilators of the Hermae, replied, 'By the light of the moon,' a detail which gave away his whole story, since the night in question had been the last of the lunar month, when there was no moon. This caused misgivings among people who were capable of thinking for themselves, but it failed to shake the people's belief in these stories, and they went on as they had begun, arresting and imprisoning anybody who happened to be denounced.

21. Among those who were now in prison and being held for trial was Andocides the orator, whom the historian Hellanicus included among the descendants of Odysseus. He was generally believed to be an opponent of democracy and an oligarch in his sympathies. But what brought him particularly under suspicion of having taken part in the mutilation was the fact that the large statue of Hermes, which stood near his house and had been dedicated by the Aegeid tribe, was almost the only one of the few statues equally prominently placed which remained undamaged. For that reason it is known to this day as the Hermes of Andocides. Everybody calls it by that name in spite of the evidence of the inscription.

Now it happened that Andocides became particularly friendly with one of his fellow prisoners who was awaiting trial on the same charge, a man named Timaeus, less well-known than himself, but extremely intelligent and courageous. He now prevailed on Andocides to inform against himself and a few others. If he confessed, Timaeus reminded him, he would make sure of his pardon, according to the terms of the people's decree. On the other hand, nobody could foresee how the trial would turn out, and there were special reasons for men in prominent positions such as himself to fear the outcome. Surely it would be better to save one's life by fabricating a confession of a crime than to die an infamous death through being falsely accused of the same offence. Besides, from the point of view of the public interest it might well be better to sacrifice a few people of doubtful character, if in this way one could rescue a large number of good men from the people's fury. By these arguments of Timaeus's, Andocides was eventually induced to testify against himself and others. He was granted a pardon, according to the decree, but all the people he named, except for those who had fled the country, were put to

death. Andocides also included a number of his own servants to make his testimony sound more convincing.

Even then the people's wrath was not fully appeased: they turned away from the mutilators of the Hermae, but as if they now had all the more scope to vent their feelings, their fury descended in a torrent upon Alcibiades and finally the state galley, the *Salamina*, was dispatched to fetch him home.[1] They deliberately instructed its officers not to use violence or to lay hands on his person, but to convey in moderate language the order that he must accompany them home to stand his trial and clear himself before the people. They were afraid that the summons might provoke an outburst of indignation or even a mutiny in the army while it was in enemy territory, and indeed Alcibiades might very easily have brought this about if he had wished. The men were discouraged by his departure and foresaw that under Nicias's command the campaign would drag on endlessly with long periods of delay and inactivity, now that Alcibiades who provided the spur to action had been taken away. Lamachus, it is true, was a commander of warlike spirit and great personal courage, but he lacked authority and prestige because he was poor.

22. Almost immediately after he had sailed away Alcibiades deprived the Athenians of the chance to capture Messana.[2] There was a party in the city who were ready to surrender it, but Alcibiades knew who they were, and by giving precise information to the friends of Syracuse there, he succeeded in ruining the whole plan. When he arrived at Thurii, he went ashore and hid himself from the men who were searching for him. When somebody recognized him and asked, 'Can you not trust your own country, Alcibiades?' he replied, 'Yes, in other things, if you like. But where my life is at stake, I wouldn't trust my own mother not to mistake a black pebble for a white one when she casts her vote.' And when he learned later that the city had condemned him to death, he remarked, 'I'll show them that I am still alive.'

The impeachment against him is still on record and is framed as follows:

Thessalus, the son of Cimon, of the deme of Lacia, accuses Alcibiades, the son of Cleinias, of the deme of the Scambonidae, of committing

1. August 415 B.C.
2. September 415 B.C.

sacrilege against the goddesses of Eleusis, Demeter, and Kore, in that he made a mockery of the Mysteries; that he enacted them in his own house, wearing a robe such as the High Priest wears, when he displays the rites to the initiates; that he styled himself High Priest, Pulytion Torch-Bearer, and Theodorus, of the deme of Phegaea, Herald; that he addressed the rest of his companions as Initiates and Novices, contrary to the laws and ceremonies established by the Eumolpidae, Heralds, and Priests of Eleusis.

Alcibiades was condemned by default, his estate was confiscated, and it was further decreed that his name should be publicly cursed by all priests and priestesses. It is said that Theano, the daughter of Menon of the deme of Agraule, was the only one who refused to execute this decree; she declared that she was a priestess dedicated to prayer, not to curses.

23. When this terrible judgement and sentence were passed on Alcibiades, he was living at Argos, for he had crossed over to the Peloponnese immediately after escaping from Thurii. But even there he still went in fear of his enemies, and he now decided to renounce his country altogether. So he sent word to the Spartans asking for asylum and promising that he would render them services greater than all the harm he had done them when he was their enemy. The Spartans granted his request and received him. As soon as he arrived he lost no time in getting one vital measure carried out. The Spartans had been hesitating over sending help to the Syracusans and putting off any definite action, but Alcibiades so stirred them up and encouraged them that they dispatched Gylippus to Sicily with orders to take command and destroy the Athenian army. Another stroke of his was to persuade them to renew operations against the Athenians in Attica, and thirdly, and most important of all, to fortify Decelea.[1] It was this, more than any other single action, which wore down the resources of Athens and finally ruined her.

At Sparta his public reputation already stood high, but he now earned just as much admiration for his private conduct, and by adopting Spartan customs in his everyday life he captivated the people and brought them under his spell. When they watched him wearing his

1. A fortress about fifteen miles north of Athens, commanding the routes to Euboea and Boeotia. Its occupation by the Peloponnesians served to harass the cultivation of Attica and its communications still further, and the post also served as a rallying-point to which thousands of slaves escaped.

hair untrimmed, taking cold baths, eating coarse bread, and dining on black broth, they could scarcely believe their eyes, and began to wonder whether the man they now saw had ever kept a cook in his house, or so much as looked at a perfumer, or endured the touch of Milesian wool on his skin. Alcibiades possessed, we are told, one special gift which surpassed all the rest and served to attach men to him, namely that he could assimilate and adapt himself to the pursuits and the manner of living of others and submit himself to more startling transformations than a chameleon. Even the chameleon cannot take on the colour of white, but Alcibiades was able to associate with good and bad alike, and never found a characteristic which he could not imitate or practise. Thus, in Sparta he was all for physical exercise, the simple life, and an appearance of forbidding austerity; in Ionia for luxury, pleasure, and indolence; in Thrace he could drink with the best; in Thessaly he was never out of the saddle, and when he found himself in the company of Tissaphernes the satrap, he surpassed even the magnificence of the Persian in his pomp and extravagance. It was not so much that he could pass with ease from one type of behaviour to another, nor that his own character was transformed in every case; but when he saw that by following his own inclinations he would give offence to his associates, he promptly assumed whatever manner or exterior was appropriate to the situation. At any rate in Sparta, so far as all the externals went, one could say of him, 'This is no son of Achilles, but Achilles himself' – just such a man as Lycurgus might have brought up. But if one judges by what he actually felt and did, one might exclaim, as Euripides did of Helen, 'The same woman as of old.'

While King Agis was away on his campaigns, Alcibiades seduced his wife Timaea, so that she became pregnant by him and did not attempt to deny the fact. When she gave birth to a boy, it was called Leotychides in public, but the name which the mother whispered to her friends and attendants was Alcibiades, so completely was she carried away by her passion for him. He himself said, in his mocking fashion, that he had not done this as a mere insult, nor simply to gratify his appetite, but to ensure that his descendants would one day rule over the Spartans.

There were many people who reported these facts to Agis, but it was the matter of the dates which convinced him of the truth of the story. There had been an earthquake in Sparta and the king had

leaped up from his wife's side and ran out of the room in terror, and had then had no further intercourse with her for ten months. As Leotychides was born at the end of this period, Agis refused to recognize him as his son, and for this reason he was not admitted to the succession later on.[1]

24. After the destruction of the Athenian expedition to Sicily,[2] the peoples of Chios, Lesbos, and Cyzicus all sent delegations at the same time to Sparta to discuss the prospects of a revolt against Athens. The Boeotians supported Lesbos's appeal and Pharnabazus that of Cyzicus, but the Spartans, on Alcibiades' advice, chose to help Chios before all the others. Alcibiades himself sailed out and succeeded in inciting almost all the Ionian cities to revolt, and as he cooperated closely with the Spartan generals he did great harm to the Athenians. However, Agis had now become his personal enemy because of the wrong Alcibiades had done him as a husband, and he was also displeased at the reputation Alcibiades was winning for himself, since it was commonly said that most of Sparta's success was due to his efforts. The most powerful and ambitious of the Spartans were by now both jealous and tired of him, and they had influence enough to prevail on the magistrates at home to send out orders to Ionia for Alcibiades to be put to death.

Alcibiades received secret intelligence of this. The news frightened him, and so while he played his part with the Spartans in all their enterprises, he carefully avoided placing himself in their hands. Instead he attached himself for safety's sake to the Persian king's satrap Tissaphernes, and soon came to occupy the highest place in his favour. The barbarian, who was naturally inclined to malice and enjoyed the company of rogues, being anything but a straightforward man himself, admired intensely Alcibiades' versatility and exceptional cleverness. And indeed the charm of his daily life and conversation was such that no disposition could wholly resist it, and no character remain unaffected. Even those who feared and envied him could not help taking pleasure in his company, and while they enjoyed it their resentment was disarmed. Tissaphernes himself, in spite of being as bitter an enemy as Greece ever found among the Persians, succumbed so completely to Alcibiades' flatteries that he surpassed him in responding to them. He decreed that the most beautiful park he possessed,

1. See also *Lysander*, Ch. 22.
2. The narrative now jumps from 415 to 413 B.C.

which was famous for its refreshing streams and meadows and contained pavilions and pleasances decorated in a regal and extravagant style, should be named after Alcibiades, and everybody always spoke of it by that name.

25. Accordingly, Alcibiades now abandoned the Spartan cause, since he mistrusted them and feared Agis, and he set himself to malign and represent them in the worst light to Tissaphernes. He advised the satrap neither to help the Spartans whole-heartedly nor yet to finish off the Athenians; instead, by stinting whatever help he gave, he could cause difficulties to both sides and gradually wear them down and so render them an easy prey to the king, when they had wasted their strength on one another. Tissaphernes was easily convinced by this reasoning and openly expressed his regard and admiration for Alcibiades. In consequence the Greeks on both sides looked up to him, and the Athenians, now that they were suffering at his hands, began to regret the sentence they had passed on him. Meanwhile, Alcibiades himself began to be troubled by the fear that if Athens were utterly destroyed, he might fall into the hands of his enemies the Spartans.

At this time,[1] almost the whole strength of the Athenian forces was concentrated at Samos. Using this island as a naval base for their operations, they were trying to reconquer those of their allies who had seceded and keep their hold on the remainder. In one way or another they still contrived to be a match for their enemies at sea, but their greatest fear was of Tissaphernes and the fleet of 150 Phoenician triremes which was reported to be in the offing, for if this once came up, Athens' hopes were doomed. Alcibiades knew these facts and he sent word secretly to the Athenian leaders on Samos, holding out the hope that he might bring over Tissaphernes to their side. He explained that he was not doing this to win the favour of the masses, whom he did not trust, but rather for the aristocrats, if only they would summon up the courage to show that they were men, curb the insolence of the people, take the government into their hands, and save their cause and their country by their own efforts.

The rest of the aristocrats were strongly disposed to listen to Alcibiades. But one of their generals, Phrynichus of the deme of Deirades, suspected – quite correctly – that Alcibiades cared no more for an oligarchy than for a democracy, but was ready to follow any course

1. The winter of 412–411 B.C.

of action to get himself recalled from exile, and so was maligning the people as the best way of cultivating the aristocrats in advance and insinuating himself into their favour. He therefore opposed Alcibiades' plan. But his advice was overruled, and as he now stood revealed as an enemy of Alcibiades, he sent word secretly to Astyochus, the Peloponnesians' naval commander, telling him to be on his guard against Alcibiades and to arrest him as he was playing a double game. However, without his knowing it, he had met his match in treachery, for Astyochus stood greatly in awe of Tissaphernes, and as he saw that Alcibiades carried such influence with him, he informed them both of Phrynichus's message, whereupon Alcibiades at once dispatched messengers to Samos to denounce Phrynichus. All the Athenians there were indignant and proceeded to combine against Phrynichus who could now see no escape from his predicament and so tried to remedy one offence by committing another that was far greater. He sent word again to Astyochus, reproaching him for having betrayed his first message, and this time offering to deliver the Athenian camp and their fleet into his hands.

However, the Athenians did not suffer from Phrynichus's treachery, because Astyochus repeated his double-dealing and again passed on Phrynichus's message to Alcibiades. But Phrynichus foresaw this. He anticipated a second denunciation from Alcibiades and got in first by warning the Athenians himself that the enemy were on the point of attacking them, and advised them to get on board their ships and fortify their camp. The Athenians had already begun to do this when a second letter arrived from Alcibiades, telling them to beware of Phrynichus, as he was plotting to betray their naval base to the enemy. They refused to credit this letter at the time, as they supposed that Alcibiades must know all about the enemy's strength and intentions and was using this knowledge to incriminate Phrynichus falsely. But some time later,[1] when Hermon, a soldier belonging to one of the frontier patrols in Attica, stabbed Phrynichus with a dagger and killed him in the open market-place, the Athenians tried Phrynichus's case and found him guilty of treason, and so they awarded crowns to Hermon[2] and his comrades.

1. In the summer of 411 B.C. See Thucydides, viii, 92.

2. Plutarch has somewhat confused Thucydides' account (viii, 92). The soldier's name was not Hermon: the latter was the commander of the frontier guard at Munychia.

26. But to return to Samos. Alcibiades' friends were now in control and sent Pisander to Athens to attempt to change the form of government: he was to encourage the aristocratic leaders to overthrow the democracy and take charge of affairs, on the ground that only under these conditions could Alcibiades secure for them the friendship and alliance of Tissaphernes. This was the pretext put forward by the men who established the oligarchy in Athens. But as soon as[1] the so-called Five Thousand – who were in fact only Four Hundred – came into power and took control of affairs, they at once ignored Alcibiades and noticeably slackened the prosecution of the war. This was partly because they distrusted the citizen body, which was by no means reconciled to the change of regime, and partly because they believed that the Spartans, who were always partial to an oligarchy, would offer them more reasonable terms.

Meanwhile, the popular party in Athens had been terrorized into submission, since many of those who openly opposed the Four Hundred had been assassinated. But the troops at Samos were enraged when they heard the news and their first impulse was to sail immediately to Athens. They sent for Alcibiades,[2] elected him general, and demanded that he should put himself at their head and overthrow the tyrants.

Any ordinary man, on finding himself suddenly raised to the heights of power by the popular will, would have indulged and humoured them and felt that he must fall in with their wishes and not oppose them in anything, seeing that they had promoted him from a mere exile and a vagabond to be the commander of such an army and fleet. Instead, Alcibiades, as became a great leader, felt that he must resist the blind fury which seized them at first, and he restrained them from making a fatal blunder. On this occasion, at least, there is no doubt that he saved the Athenian empire. If the fleet had sailed home, the whole of Ionia, the Hellespont and the islands might have fallen into the enemy's hands without a blow being struck, while Athenian would have fought Athenian and carried the war inside their own city walls. The fact that none of this came to pass was thanks to Alcibiades more than to any other man. He not only convinced the people and showed them their danger by his speeches in public, but he appealed to them as individuals, using entreaties with some and

1. May 411 B.C.
2. June–July 411 B.C.

force with others. In this he was helped by Thrasybulus[1] of Stiris, who accompanied him and used his lungs to great effect: he was said to possess the most powerful voice of any Athenian of the time.

Another invaluable service which Alcibiades rendered was his undertaking that the Phoenician fleet, which the king of Persia had sent out and which the Spartans were expecting, should be brought over to the Athenian side, or at any rate should be prevented from joining their enemies. He sailed away in haste to make sure of this, and although the ships were actually sighted off Aspendus, Tissaphernes did not bring them any further and in this way deceived the Spartans. Both sides believed that it was Alcibiades' efforts which had diverted the fleet, but the Spartans in particular were convinced that he was advising the Persians to let the Greeks destroy one another, for it was clear that whichever side received such a powerful reinforcement would be able to deprive the other completely of the control of the sea.

27. Not long after the Four Hundred were overthrown[2] and on this occasion Alcibiades' friends enthusiastically supported the democratic cause. The people now not only desired but commanded Alcibiades to return. However, he thought it best not to meet them empty-handed, without any positive achievement to his credit and owing his recall to the pity and good-nature of the people, but rather to arrive in a blaze of glory. To begin with, therefore, he sailed with a small squadron from Samos and cruised off Cnidus and Cos. There he learned that Mindarus, the Spartan admiral, had sailed with his entire fleet for the Hellespont and that the Athenians had followed him, so he put on all speed to help the Athenian commanders. He happened to arrive with his eighteen triremes at the critical moment in the action. Both sides had committed all their ships to battle off Abydos, they had fought till evening and were locked in a tremendous struggle with the battle evenly poised between victory and defeat. The appearance of Alcibiades' ships had the effect of deceiving both sides; the Athenians were disheartened, while the enemy took fresh courage. But Alcibiades swiftly ran up the Athenian ensign on his flagship and bore down on that part of the Peloponnesian fleet

1. The son of Lycus and a successful soldier, to be distinguished from the son of Thraso (Ch. 36).

2. They had seized power in June 411 B.C. and were overthrown in September.

which held the advantage and was pursuing the Athenians. He routed and drove them ashore and following close behind, rammed the ships and shattered their hulls. The crews swam to land, and here Pharnabazus came to their rescue with his infantry and fought along the water's edge to defend the ships. But finally the Athenians captured thirty of the Peloponnesian vessels, recovered their own and set up a trophy.

Alcibiades was prompted by his vanity to take advantage of such a brilliant success and display his laurels to Tissaphernes. He laid in a stock of diplomatic gifts, put himself at the head of a princely retinue and set off to visit the satrap. But he did not meet the reception he had expected. For some time past the Spartans had been blackening Tissaphernes' reputation with the king, and as he was afraid of falling into disfavour on this account, he felt that Alcibiades had come at a most convenient moment. So he arrested and imprisoned him in Sardis, hoping that this act of injustice would serve to disprove the stories which the Spartans had been telling about him.

28. After thirty days Alcibiades gave his guards the slip, found a horse by some means or other, and took refuge at Clazomenae. To disgrace the satrap he gave it out that Tissaphernes had allowed him to escape and then he sailed to the Athenian camp,[1] where he learned that Mindarus was in Cyzicus together with Pharnabazus. Upon this he roused the soldiers' spirits by telling them that they could now look forward to action on land and sea and siege-warfare as well, because unless they won every battle they fought, there would be no pay for them. He then manned his ships and proceeded to Proconnesus,[2] giving orders for all the small trading craft they met to be seized and kept under guard, so that the enemy should receive no warning of his approach from any quarter.

It so happened that a torrential downpour, together with sudden darkness and peals of thunder, all combined to keep his plan secret. In fact, not only did the enemy fail to notice him, but the Athenians themselves had given up all idea of fighting, when he suddenly ordered them on board and put out to sea. After a little while the

1. In the spring of 410 B.C. The scene of operations has now shifted to the Sea of Marmora. Cyzicus was an important port there and the Athenian camp was at Cardia on the northern shore of the Chersonese.

2. An island in the Sea of Marmora.

gloom lifted and the Peloponnesian ships were sighted riding off the harbour of Cyzicus. Alcibiades was afraid that if they caught sight of the full strength of his fleet they might run for the shore, and so he ordered the other commanders to reduce speed and remain in the rear, while he himself with only forty ships sailed into view of the enemy and challenged them to battle. The Peloponnesians were completely deceived and thinking this a contemptibly small force, sailed out and immediately closed and began to grapple with them. Presently, when the battle was joined, the rest of the Athenian ships bore down on them, whereupon the Peloponnesians turned and fled in panic.

Then Alcibiades with twenty of his fastest vessels broke through their line and put in to shore. He disembarked his crews, fell on the enemy, and slaughtered many of them as they fled from their ships. Mindarus and Pharnabazus now came to the rescue, but were overwhelmed. Mindarus was killed fighting bravely, while Pharnabazus escaped. The Athenians were left in possession of great numbers of the dead and of their arms and they captured all the enemy's ships. They went on to storm Cyzicus, which Pharnabazus left to its fate, and they wiped out the Peloponnesian garrison there. In this way the Athenians not only secured firm control of the Hellespont, but they drove the Spartans from the neighbouring waters as well. They also intercepted a dispatch which communicated this disaster to the ephors in typically 'laconic' style. It read: 'Ships lost: Mindarus dead: men starving: do not know what to do.'

29. The soldiers who had served under Alcibiades were now so elated and confident that they disdained to mix any longer with the rest of the army; they boasted that the others had been defeated time and again, but that they were invincible. Not very long before this, Thrasyllus had been defeated at Ephesus and the Ephesians had put up a bronze trophy to commemorate the Athenians' disgrace. This was the failure which Alcibiades' soldiers cast in the teeth of Thrasyllus's men, and at the same time they bragged about themselves and their general to the point of refusing even to take part in training with the others or to share their quarters. However, when Pharnabazus with a large force of infantry and cavalry attacked Thrasyllus's soldiers, who had been carrying out a raid on the territory of Abydos, Alcibiades marched out to their help, routed Pharnabazus's troops and, joining

forces with Thrasyllus, pursued them till nightfall. In this way the two armies were reconciled; they fraternized with each other and returned to their camp in high spirits. The next day Alcibiades set up a trophy and plundered Pharnabazus's territory without meeting any opposition. He even captured some priests and priestesses, but let them go without demanding a ransom.

The city of Chalcedon had revolted from Athens and admitted a Spartan governor and garrison. When Alcibiades set out to attack it, he learned that the inhabitants had collected everything in their country that was likely to be plundered and deposited it with the people of Bithynia, who were their friends. So he marched his army to the Bithynian frontier and sent a herald ahead to charge the people with the responsibility for this. The Bithynians were terrified at his approach, surrendered the property, and made a treaty of friendship with him.

30. While he was engaged[1] in cutting off Chalcedon with a wall that stretched from sea to sea, Pharnabazus arrived with an army to raise the siege, and at the same time Hippocrates the Spartan governor led his forces out of the city and attacked the Athenians. Alcibiades then drew up his army so as to face both enemies at once; he forced Pharnabazus to beat an ignominious retreat and defeated and killed Hippocrates and many of his troops.

He then sailed into the Hellespont to raise money from the cities on the coast and he also captured Selymbria, where he risked his life far beyond any necessity for doing so. There was a group of men in the city who were prepared to betray it, and they had agreed to give him the signal by holding up a lighted torch at midnight. However, they were forced to do this before the appointed time, for fear of one of their number who suddenly backed out, and so the torch was raised before the Athenian army was ready. Thereupon, Alcibiades took some thirty men with him and ran to the walls, ordering the rest of his force to follow as quickly as they could. The gate was opened for him and he dashed into the city with his thirty infantrymen, supported by another twenty light-armed soldiers, but then he saw in an instant that the Selymbrians, fully armed, were advancing down the street against him. To stand and fight was hopeless, but for a man of his spirit, who had never been beaten in a campaign up to that

1. In the spring of 409 B.C.

moment, it was equally inconceivable to retreat. So he had the trumpet sounded to call for silence, and then ordered one of those present to make a formal proclamation that Selymbria must not take up arms against Athens. This announcement cooled the ardour of some of the Selymbrians, as they imagined that the enemy were by now all inside the city walls, while others were encouraged in their hopes of arranging a peaceful settlement, and meanwhile, as the two sides stood opposite each other parleying, Alcibiades' army came up. He judged at this point, correctly as it turned out, that the Selymbrians were in favour of peace, but he was afraid that his Thracian troops might sack the city. There were large numbers of these serving in his army as volunteers because of their goodwill and personal attachment to Alcibiades. He therefore ordered all these men outside and complied with the Selymbrians' entreaties not to harm their city; he did no more than compel them to pay him a sum of money, and then posted a garrison and departed.

31. Meanwhile, the Athenian generals who were laying siege to Chalcedon made an agreement with Pharnabazus on the following terms. They were to be paid a sum of money; Chalcedon should once more become subject to Athens; Pharnabazus's territory should not be ravaged, and Pharnabazus himself should provide safe escort for an Athenian delegation to visit the king of Persia. So when Alcibiades came back from Selymbria, Pharnabazus demanded that he should also swear to observe these conditions, but Alcibiades refused to take the oath until Pharnabazus himself had done so.

When the treaty had been confirmed by oath, Alcibiades proceeded to Byzantium, which was in revolt against Athens, and surrounded the city with a wall.[1] Then Anaxilaus, Lycurgus, and various others offered to surrender the city to him on the understanding that it would not be sacked. Alcibiades let the story get about that he had been called away by various threatening developments in Ionia and sailed off in broad daylight with his entire fleet. Then on the same night he secretly returned, went ashore with the infantry, and silently moved up to the city walls. At the same time the Athenian fleet made for the harbour and forced its way in with a great deal of shouting, commotion, and general uproar. The surprise was complete, and the unexpectedness of the attack at once terrified the Byzantines and at

1. In the winter of 409–408 B.C.

the same time gave the pro-Athenian party the chance to let in Alcibiades unhindered, as everybody had hurried off to the harbour and the ships. However, they did not capture the city without a struggle. The Peloponnesians, Boeotians, and Megarians, who were stationed in Byzantium, routed the ships' crews and drove them back on board, and when they discovered that the Athenians were inside the city, they formed up in battle order and advanced to attack them. Some hard fighting followed, but Alcibiades on the right wing and Theramenes on the left carried the day and they captured some 300 of the enemy who survived.

After the battle not a single Byzantine citizen was put to death or banished. These were the general terms which the men inside the city had asked for and been granted when they surrendered it, and they did not hold out for any privileged treatment for themselves. For this reason, when Anaxilaus was later tried at Sparta for treason, he was able to show clearly in his defence that he had done nothing dishonourable. He pleaded that he was not a Spartan but a Byzantine, and that it was not Sparta but Byzantium which was threatened: he saw that the city was completely hemmed in, that nothing could be brought inside, and that the Peloponnesians and Boeotians were eating whatever provisions remained, while the Byzantines with their wives and children were starving. What he had done was not to betray the city to its enemies, but to deliver it from war with all its attendant horrors, and in this he had followed the example of the noblest Spartans, for whom their country's interest was the one absolute criterion of honour and justice. The Spartans, when they heard these arguments, felt obliged to respect them and acquitted all the accused.

32. Now at last Alcibiades was overcome with the longing to see his native country again, and still more to let his countrymen see him crowned with the honours of all his victories over their enemies. And so he set sail for home,[1] with the Athenian ships of the line decorated from stem to stern with the shields and trophies of war. They towed in their wake the many prizes they had captured, and they carried an even larger number of figureheads taken from the triremes Alcibiades had defeated and sunk. There were no less than 200 of these altogether.

Duris of Samos, who claimed that he was a descendant of Alcibiades,

1. He started from Samos in the spring of 408 B.C.

has given us some further details. He says that Alcibiades' oarsmen pulled to a rowing-song played to them by Chrysogonus, the champion flute-player at the Pythian Games. The rhythm of the stroke was given them by Callipides the tragic actor, both these performers being dressed in the ungirt tunics and long flowing robes of their profession, and Alcibiades' flagship, he tells us, put into the harbours on its way with a purple sail hoisted, as though he were leading a crowd of revellers after some drinking-party. On the other hand, neither Theopompus, nor Ephorus, nor Xenophon mentions any of this, and it does not seem likely that Alcibiades would have put on such airs for the Athenians, considering that he was returning after having been exiled and suffering a host of misfortunes. On the contrary, as he sailed into the harbour of Munychia, he was seized with misgivings; and once there, he did not move from his trireme until, as he waited on deck, he caught sight of Euryptolemus his cousin with many of his other friends and relatives on the shore, as they stood there welcoming and cheering him.

When he landed, people scarcely seemed to have eyes for the other generals they met, but they ran and crowded round Alcibiades, crying out and embracing him. As they escorted him on his way, those who could press near crowned him with garlands and the rest gazed at him from a distance, the old men pointing him out to the young. But there were tears mingled with the people's joy as men remembered the misfortunes of the past and compared them to their present happiness, for they reflected that they would never have suffered the Sicilian disaster or any other of their terrible disappointments if only they had left Alcibiades in command of that expedition and kept him at the head of affairs. As it was, he had found Athens all but driven from the seas, while on land she was mistress of little more than the ground the city stood on, with factions raging inside her own walls; and from these forlorn and miserable remnants of her glory he had raised her up again, and not merely restored her dominion over the seas, but made her victorious over her enemies everywhere on land.

33. The decree for his recall had already been passed[1] on the initiative of Critias, the son of Callaeschrus, and he refers to it in his elegiac verses, where he reminds Alcibiades of this service:

1. Three years earlier in 411 B.C.

The decree which restored you was mine; I spoke of it first to the people,
Drafted it, wrote it down, and had it enacted as law.
The seal was set on my words, and this is the sanction it follows.

Soon after his return, the Athenians assembled in the Pnyx, where Alcibiades addressed them. He spoke with tears of his own misfortunes, but he uttered no reproaches against the people except in minor matters and he used moderate language towards them. All that had gone wrong he blamed on his personal ill-fortune and an evil genius that had dogged his career. Then he dwelt at length on the vain hopes which the enemies of Athens cherished, and finally, he gave the people reasons for taking heart and roused their spirits. They responded by placing a crown of gold on his head and electing him general with absolute powers by land and sea. They also decreed that his property should be restored and that the Heralds and the Eumolpidae should revoke the curses they had pronounced on him at the people's command. While all the others revoked their curses, Theodorus the High Priest declared, 'If he is doing the state no harm, then I never laid a curse on him.'

34. But even while Alcibiades' star shone so brightly, some people were none the less disturbed at the moment he had chosen for his return. He had put into harbour on the very day when the Plynteria of Athena were being celebrated, that is to say the rites of purifying the statue of the goddess on the Acropolis. The ministering priests, the Praxiergidae, carry out these ceremonies in strict secrecy on the twenty-fifth day of the month Thargelion, when they strip off the robes of the goddess and cover her statue. For this reason the Athenians regard that date as the unluckiest in the whole year for business of any kind, and so the goddess, far from welcoming Alcibiades graciously and with goodwill, appeared to be hiding her face and rejecting him. In spite of this, everything continued to go as Alcibiades wished and a hundred triremes were manned for him to put to sea again. However, at this moment he was seized with a noble ambition which kept him at home until the celebration of the Eleusinian Mysteries.

Ever since Decelea had been fortified, the enemy through their presence there had controlled the approaches to Eleusis, and the Athenians had been obliged to send the festal procession by sea, shorn of all its usual splendour, so that the customary sacrifices, dances, and

many of the sacred rites which are normally performed on the road when Iacchus is escorted to Eleusis had necessarily been omitted. Alcibiades felt that it would be a splendid gesture, which would at once establish his piety towards the gods and enhance his reputation in the eyes of men, if he could restore the festival to its traditional form by having his infantry escort the procession by land under the very eyes of the enemy. In this way he would either humiliate Agis and inflict a setback on him if the king made no move, or, if he attacked, Alcibiades would be fighting in a holy cause favoured by the gods in defence of the highest and most sacred interests, in full view of his native city and with all his fellow countrymen as witnesses of his valour.

When he had decided on this and told the Eumolpidae and the Heralds of his plan, he posted sentries on the heights, sent out an advance guard at daybreak, and then, marshalling the priests, novices, and initiators, and placing them in the centre of his column, he led them along the road to Eleusis in solemn order and complete silence. So imposing and devout was the spectacle that those who were not blinded by jealousy of him declared that he had proved himself not merely a general but a high priest and an initiator into the Mysteries. The enemy did not dare to attack, and he brought the procession safely back to Athens. The occasion did much to raise his own spirits, and it inspired his troops with the faith that under his command they were invincible and irresistible. The sway which he held over the humbler and poorer classes was so potent that they were filled with an extraordinary passion for him to rule them as a dictator: some of them proposed this and actually visited him to press the idea. They wanted him to be placed in a position that was out of the reach of envy. Then he could sweep away decrees and laws as he thought fit and rid them of those loud-mouthed wind-bags who were the bane of the city, and he would be free to handle affairs and act without fear of informers.

35. We do not know what Alcibiades himself thought of a dictatorship. But certainly the leading citizens at this time were frightened of it and showed great concern that he should set sail as soon as possible. They voted everything he could wish for, including even the colleagues of his own choice. So he sailed away[1] with his hundred ships and attacked Andros. He defeated the inhabitants and the Spartans

1. October 408 B.C.

who were posted there, but he did not capture the city, and this was to become the first of the new charges which his enemies lodged against him.

Indeed, if ever a man was destroyed by his own high reputation it was Alcibiades. His repeated successes had built him up into such a prodigy of audacity and intelligence that any failure was put down to a lack of will to succeed, and people found it impossible to believe that he could ever fall short in ability, for they were convinced that nothing which he seriously wanted to achieve was beyond him. They were confidently expecting news of the capture of Chios and the whole Ionian coast, and they were annoyed when they heard that Alcibiades had not achieved all his objectives at once simply to meet their wishes. In particular, they never stopped to consider his lack of money. He was fighting men whose paymaster was the king of Persia, and it was this fact which repeatedly forced him to leave his headquarters and sail off to look for money and rations for his men. This necessity was the direct cause of the final and decisive charge against him. Lysander had been sent out by the Spartans to command their fleet, and he proceeded to raise his sailors' pay out of the subsidies given him by Cyrus from three obols a day to four, while Alcibiades, who already found it difficult to maintain even the three obols, was forced to sail to Caria to levy money. Antiochus, whom he had left in command, was a good pilot but a man of low birth and utterly lacking in judgement. He had received strict orders from Alcibiades not to risk a general engagement, even if the enemy sailed out to meet him, but he showed such insolent disregard for his instructions as to man his own trireme and one other and stand in to Ephesus. There he sailed across the bows of the enemy's ships, shouting out scurrilous abuse and making insulting gestures as he passed. At first Lysander put out with only a few ships to pursue him, but when the Athenians came up to help Antiochus he brought out the whole fleet and gained a complete victory. He killed Antiochus, captured a great many ships and set up a trophy. As soon as Alcibiades heard the news he returned to Samos, put to sea with his whole force and offered Lysander battle. But the Spartan was content with his victory and would not stir out to meet him.

36. Among Alcibiades' enemies in the army was Thrasybulus, the son of Thraso, a particularly bitter opponent, who now sailed to Athens to denounce him. He roused the people's anger by declaring

that it was Alcibiades who had ruined their cause and thrown away their ships by wanton abuse of his authority. He had entrusted the command, Thrasybulus went on, to men who had won his confidence simply through their capacity for drinking and spinning sailors' yarns, because he wanted to leave himself free to cruise about raising money and indulging in debauchery and drunken orgies with the courtesans of Abydos and Ionia, and all this with the enemy's fleet close at hand. Alcibiades' enemies also found fault with him because of the stronghold he had built near Bisanthe in Thrace, which he intended, they said, to use as a bolt-hole, in case he could not or would not live in Athens. These charges had their effect on the Athenians, and they showed their anger and resentment by appointing other generals to supersede him. When he learned this, Alcibiades was alarmed and left the camp once and for all. He recruited a force of mercenaries and campaigned on his own account against the Thracian tribes, who do not acknowledge any king. He collected plenty of money from the prisoners he captured, and at the same time he made the Greeks who lived on the frontier secure from the inroads of the barbarians.

Two years later the main theatre of the war had shifted to Aegospotami,[1] where Tydeus, Menander, and Adeimantus, Alcibiades' successors in command, were stationed with the entire fleet that Athens could then muster. It had become their habit to sail out each day at first light against Lysander, whose ships lay at Lampsacus, and challenge him to battle. Then they would sail back and spend the rest of the day ashore, abandoning all discipline and without even keeping a look-out, as though they despised their enemy. Alcibiades, who was living in his stronghold close by,[2] could not bring himself to look on and take no notice of their behaviour, and so he rode over and tried to warn the generals. He told them that their station was badly chosen; there was no harbour and no city nearby, their supplies had to be fetched all the way from Sestos and their crews, whenever they went ashore, were allowed to roam about the countryside at will: on the other hand the fleet which was anchored opposite them was trained to obey any order in silence at the word of one man.

37. The generals remained deaf to Alcibiades' advice to move the fleet's station to Sestos and to all his warnings, and Tydeus actually

1. September 405 B.C.
2. Near Pactye.

insulted him outright and told him to take himself off, as there were others in command now. So Alcibiades left them, suspecting that there was treachery afoot. He remarked to his friends who escorted him out of the camp that if he had not been so outrageously insulted by the generals, he would have forced the Spartans in a few days either to lose their ships or to fight an action at sea that was not of their own choosing. Some people thought this was mere bravado, but others believed he might well have done what he said, if he had brought up his large force of Thracian light-armed troops and cavalry, who could have attacked the Spartan camp from the landward side and thrown it into confusion.

At any rate the outcome soon showed that he had foreseen the Athenians' blunders only too clearly. Lysander made a sudden surprise attack by sea, and only eight of the Athenian triremes escaped under Conon. All the rest, a little under two hundred, were captured and towed away. Three thousand of their crews were taken prisoner and put to death by Lysander, and within a year[1] he had gone on to capture Athens, burn her fleet, and pull down her Long Walls.

Alcibiades was now in deadly fear of the Spartans, who were masters everywhere by land and sea, and he moved his quarters to Bithynia. He sent a great deal of his treasure ahead and took large sums with him, but left even more behind in the stronghold where he had been living. In Bithynia he again lost much of his property at the hands of the Thracians, and he decided to go up to the court of Artaxerxes. He calculated that he could prove himself at least as useful as Themistocles had done if the king would try out his services, and he believed, too, that he had a better excuse for offering them, since he would be helping the king and asking him to supply forces not against his fellow countrymen, as in the case of Themistocles, but against their common enemy. He judged that Pharnabazus would be the man best placed to arrange a safe passage for him to the Persian king, and so he went up to Phrygia and stayed with the satrap, paying court to him and receiving various marks of honour in return.

38. The loss of their supremacy dealt a terrible blow to the spirit of the Athenians. But when Lysander went on to deprive them of their freedom as well and handed over the city to the Thirty Tyrants, their eyes began to be opened – now that their affairs were irretrievably

1. By April 404 B.C.

ruined – to the various actions they had failed to take while it was still in their power to save themselves. In despair they recalled their past mistakes and follies, and they considered that the greatest of all had been their second outburst against Alcibiades. They had thrown him aside through no fault of his own, but simply because they were angry with one of his subordinates for having disgraced himself and lost a few ships, yet they themselves had behaved far more disgracefully in depriving the city of the finest and most experienced general they possessed. And yet in the midst of all their troubles, a faint glimmer of hope yet remained, that the cause of Athens could never be utterly lost so long as Alcibiades was alive. In the past he had not been content to lead a peaceful or passive existence in exile and now, too, if his means allowed, they believed that he would not look on supinely at the triumph of the Spartans or the outrages of the Thirty Tyrants.

It was not surprising that the people should cherish dreams of this kind, when even the Thirty paid such attention to Alcibiades and took so much trouble to inquire into all his plans and actions. Finally, Critias impressed it upon Lysander that Sparta's control over Greece would never be secure so long as Athens remained a democracy, and that however amiably disposed Athens might be towards oligarchy, Alcibiades would never allow her to settle down in her present condition as long as he lived. Lysander remained unmoved by these arguments, until a dispatch arrived from the authorities in Sparta ordering him to have Alcibiades put out of the way: we do not know whether they, too, had become alarmed at his energy and enterprise, or whether they were trying to gratify king Agis.

39. Lysander then sent word to Pharnabazus to carry out the order and Pharnabazus entrusted its execution to his brother Magaeus and his uncle Susamithras. At this time Alcibiades was staying in a village in Phrygia, where he had Timandra the courtesan living with him. One night he had a dream that he was wearing his mistress's clothes, while she was holding his head in her arms and painting his face with pigments and white lead like a woman's. Others say that in his dream he saw his body all in flames and Magaeus's men cutting off his head. At any rate they all agree that the dream took place not long before his death.

The men who were sent to kill him did not dare to enter his house,

but surrounded it and set it on fire. When Alcibiades discovered this, he collected most of the clothes and bedding in the house and threw them on the fire. Then he wrapped his cloak around his left arm, and with the sword in his right dashed through the flames untouched before his clothes could catch alight, and scattered the barbarians, who fled at the sight of him. None of them stood their ground nor attempted to close with him, but kept out of reach and shot at him with javelins and arrows. So Alcibiades fell, and when the barbarians had gone, Timandra took up his body, covered it, and wrapped it in her own clothes and gave it as sumptuous and honourable a burial as she could provide.

This Timandra, they say, was the mother of the famous courtesan Lais, who was known as the Corinthian, although she had, in fact, been brought as a prisoner of war from Hyccara,[1] a small town in Sicily. However, some writers, although they agree in the other details of Alcibiades' death with the account which I have given, insist that it was not Pharnabazus nor Lysander nor the Spartans who were responsible, but Alcibiades himself. They say that he had seduced a girl belonging to a well-known family in Phrygia and had her living with him. It was this girl's brothers who were enraged at her dishonour, set fire by night to the house where Alcibiades was living, and shot him down, as has been described, when he dashed out through the flames.

1. See *Nicias*, Ch. 15.

9

LYSANDER

[d. 395 B.C.]

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THE treasury of the people of Acanthus at Delphi bears this inscription: 'The spoils which Brasidas and the Acanthians took from the Athenians.' For this reason many people suppose that the marble figure standing inside just by the door represents Brasidas. But in fact, it is a statue of Lysander, wearing his hair and beard long in the ancient fashion. It is not true, as some writers have stated, that when the Argives shaved off their hair in mourning after their great defeat,[1] the Spartans by contrast let theirs grow long in triumph for their victory. Nor again was it the fact that the Bacchiad family[2] looked mean and unsightly through having shaved their heads (when they fled from Corinth and took refuge in Sparta), which gave the Spartans the desire to wear their hair long. The truth is that this is another custom which originated with Lycurgus. He is reported to have said that a fine head of hair makes handsome men look more handsome and ugly men more terrifying.

2. Lysander's father, Aristocleitus, is said to have been descended from the sons of Heracles, although he did not belong to the Spartan royal family. Lysander himself was brought up in poverty and showed himself as amenable as any Spartan to the customs of his country. He proved, too, that he possessed a manly spirit and was indifferent to all forms of pleasure, except for the kind which honoured and successful men earn by their own exploits – and this, indeed, is the only kind to which it is no disgrace for the young Spartan to yield. The Spartans expect their boys from the very first to be intensely

1. At the battle of Sepeia, in 494 B.C.

2. A family of oligarchs, who had ruled in Corinth and were deposed by Cypselus about 650 B.C.

conscious of public opinion, to take any censure deeply to heart as well as to exult in praise, and anyone who remains indifferent or fails to respond to these sentiments is despised as a spiritless clod, utterly lacking in any desire to excel. This kind of ambition and competitive spirit, then, had been firmly implanted in Lysander by his Spartan training, and it would be unfair to blame his natural disposition too much in this respect. On the other hand he seems to have displayed an inborn obsequiousness to the great such as one would not expect to find in a Spartan, and to have been willing to bear the arrogance of those in authority for the sake of achieving his own ends, a quality which some people regard as a great part of political capacity. Aristotle,[1] when he observes that great natures, such as those of Socrates, Plato, and Heracle, are especially prone to melancholy, notes that Lysander also became a prey to melancholy, not at first, but in his later years.

The most peculiar fact about his character, however, is that although he himself endured poverty honourably, and was never enslaved or even momentarily corrupted by money, he nevertheless filled his own country not merely with riches but with the craving for them, and he deprived Sparta of the admiration she had always enjoyed for her indifference to wealth. This came about because he brought immense quantities of gold and silver into Sparta after the war with Athens, although he did not keep a single drachma for himself. On another occasion, when Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse, sent Lysander's daughters some luxurious Sicilian tunics, he refused them, saying that he was afraid they would make his daughters look uglier. However, a little later he was sent as ambassador to the same ruler, who presented him with two dresses and told him to choose whichever he preferred and take it back to his daughter. This time he answered that she could choose better herself and took both dresses away with him.

3. The Peloponnesian War had now dragged on for many years, and after the disaster the Athenians had suffered in Sicily it seemed inevitable that they would at once lose command of the sea, and only a matter of time before they abandoned the struggle altogether. But the return of Alcibiades from exile and his resumption of the command quite transformed the situation and made the Athenian fleet once more a match for its opponents. It was then the Spartans' turn

1. *Problems*, xxx, 1.

to become alarmed and they summoned up fresh spirit for the struggle. They decided that the war demanded a leader of exceptional ability as well as larger forces, and so they appointed Lysander to take command of the Peloponnesian fleet.[1] When he arrived in Ephesus, he found the city well disposed towards him personally and enthusiastic for the Spartan cause, but in a state of great poverty and also in danger of losing its Greek character and becoming barbarized by adopting Persian customs. The reason for this was that it was encircled by Lydian territory, and the Persian generals were in the habit of using it as their headquarters. Lysander decided to make it his own base, ordered merchant shipping from every quarter to land their cargoes there, and arranged for warships to be built in the port. In this way he filled the Ephesian harbours once again with traffic, revived the activity of the market, and brought profits to every house and workshop, so that from that moment, thanks to his efforts, the city began to entertain hopes of attaining that degree of stateliness and grandeur which it now enjoys.

4. When Lysander learned that Cyrus, the king's son, had arrived in Sardis, he went there to confer with him and also to lodge complaints against Tissaphernes. The satrap had been ordered to help the Spartans drive the Athenians from Persian waters, but it was felt that because of Alcibiades' influence his support had been no more than lukewarm, and that he was undermining the efficiency of the fleet by the miserably inadequate pay he provided. As Tissaphernes was a dishonest man and was personally on bad terms with him, Cyrus was not at all unwilling to hear him blamed and maligned. Consequently, Lysander was able to find favour on this score as well as through his behaviour at their daily meetings, but it was above all through the respect and deference he showed in his conversations with Cyrus that he finally won over the young prince and prevailed on him to carry on the war more vigorously. When the Spartan commander was about to leave, Cyrus gave a banquet for him and insisted that Lysander should accept a token of his friendship: he could ask whatever he pleased and nothing would be refused him. Lysander answered: 'Since you are so kind to me, Cyrus, I beg of you to increase

1. In the autumn of 408 B.C. The Syracusan campaign had ended in 413 and Alcibiades had restored the situation by his victories at Cyzicus (410) and Byzantium (409).

my sailors' pay by an obol, and give them four obols a day instead of three.'

Cyrus was delighted with his public spirit and presented him with ten thousand darics, out of which Lysander raised his seamen's pay by an obol. In a short while he had earned such prestige by this action that he all but emptied the Athenians' ships. Most of their seamen flocked to the more generous paymaster, and those who remained grew disheartened and mutinous and gave continual trouble to their officers. But in spite of having demoralized and weakened the enemy in this way, Lysander still shrank from risking a naval battle: he knew that Alcibiades was an energetic commander, was superior to him in numbers and possessed up to that time an unbroken record of victories by land and sea.

5. Not long after this[1] Alcibiades sailed over from Samos to Phocaea, leaving his pilot Antiochus in command of the fleet. Antiochus was evidently resolved to make a gesture which would at once show off his own courage and insult Lysander. He put into the harbour of Ephesus with two triremes and ostentatiously rowed past the Peloponnesian fleet as it lay drawn up on the shore, making a great commotion and uttering shouts of laughter. Lysander was enraged and gave chase at first with only a few of his triremes: then, when he saw the Athenians coming to the rescue, he manned more of his ships, until, finally, a major battle developed. Lysander defeated the Athenians, captured fifteen triremes, and set up a trophy, whereupon there was an outburst of fury against Alcibiades at Athens and the people relieved him of his command. He found himself insulted and abused by the troops at Samos, and he therefore left the camp and sailed for the Chersonese. This battle, then, although of no great importance in itself, became famous because of its effect on Alcibiades' fortunes.

Lysander now invited to Ephesus from the various Ionian cities all those Greeks whom he had observed to be outstanding in courage and enterprise, and he planted in their minds the idea of the aristocratic councils of ten and other counter-revolutionary bodies which he later set up. He encouraged them to form political clubs in their various cities and to apply themselves to public affairs, impressing on them that as soon as the Athenians had been subdued they could throw off the forms of democratic government and become absolute rulers in

1. March 406 B.C.

their own countries, and he went on to strengthen their confidence in him by his actions. All those who were associated with him already through friendship or the ties of hospitality were promoted to important enterprises, honours, or commands, and he made himself a partner in their acts of injustice and oppression to satisfy their greed. The result was that everyone looked up to him, courted his favour and fixed their hopes upon him, believing that so long as he remained in authority all their most extravagant ambitions would be fulfilled. For the same reason they were not at all well disposed to Callicratidas, when he first appeared on the scene[1] to succeed Lysander in command of the fleet; and even after he had proved himself as brave and as just as a man could be, they still disliked the character of his leadership, which had a certain Doric simplicity and candour about it. They admired his virtue, much as they might do the beauty of some hero's statue, but they missed Lysander's whole-hearted support and looked in vain for the latter's keen partiality for the interests of his own friends, so much so that when he sailed away, they wept for sheer despair.

6. Lysander himself did what he could to make these men even more discontented with Callicratidas. He also returned to Sardis the balance of the money which Cyrus had given him to pay the fleet, telling Callicratidas that he must ask for it himself if he wanted it and must make his own arrangements to pay his men. Finally, when he was on the point of sailing, he called Callicratidas to witness that the fleet he was handing over was mistress of the seas. Callicratidas wanted to prove that this was an empty and insolent boast, and he retorted: 'If that is so, you can sail to Miletus, keeping Samos on your left, and hand over the fleet to me there. If we are masters of the sea, we need have no fear about sailing past the enemy at Samos.' Lysander answered that it was not he but Callicratidas who was in command, and then sailed off to the Peloponnese, leaving Callicratidas in an awkward dilemma. He had brought no money with him from home, and he could not bring himself to wring money out of the Greek cities on the coast at a time when they were already suffering great hardship. The only alternative left him was to hang about the doors of the king's generals, as Lysander had done, and beg for money there. It would have been difficult to find anybody less suited for

1. In 407 B.C.

this task than Callicratidas: he was a generous man of high ideals and he regarded any form of defeat, so long as it was at the hands of Greeks, as more honourable than being obliged to flatter and dance attendance on the barbarians, who had nothing to recommend them but their gold.

However, sheer necessity at length forced him to travel to Lydia, where he immediately called at Cyrus's house and sent in word that Callicratidas the admiral had arrived and wished to speak to him. One of the doorkeepers told him: 'Cyrus is busy just now, stranger: he is drinking,' to which Callicratidas replied quite innocently, 'Very well, I shall stand here and wait until he has finished.' This time, then, after being taken for a simpleton and laughed at by the Persians, he merely went away. But when he came to the door a second time and was again refused admittance, he was furious and returned to Ephesus, calling down curses on the men who had first invited humiliation from the barbarians and taught them to be insolent because of their wealth. He vowed to everyone present that as soon as he was back in Sparta he would do everything in his power to reconcile the Greek states, so that they should strike terror into the Persians and stop trying to enlist the barbarians' power against one another.

7. However, Callicratidas, whose ideals were so well worthy of Sparta, and who had shown himself fit to be compared for uprightness, magnanimity, and courage with the finest spirits of all Greece, was defeated not long after at the sea battle of Arginusae[1] and lost his life. This was a serious reverse, and the allies accordingly sent an embassy to Sparta to ask for Lysander to be made admiral: they declared that they could carry on the war far more vigorously if he was their commander, and Cyrus also sent a message to the same effect. Now the Spartans had a law which prohibited the same man from serving as admiral twice, but at the same time they were anxious to meet their allies' wishes. So they gave the title of admiral to a man named Aracus and sent out Lysander[2] nominally to be his deputy, but in reality to take command. Most of the men who possessed power and influence in the Greek cities had long been eagerly awaiting his arrival, for they were counting on his help to strengthen their position still further as soon as the democratic governments had

1. August 406 B.C.
2. In the spring of 405 B.C.

been overthrown. On the other hand to those who valued straightforward and generous conduct in their leaders, Lysander by comparison with Callicratidas seemed an equivocal and unprincipled character, and a man who disguised most of his actions in war with various forms of deceit. He would make a great parade of justice, for example, if it suited his purpose, but otherwise would make out that whatever was most profitable was best: he did not believe truth in itself to be any better than falsehood, but valued each of them according to the needs of the moment. He laughed at those who insisted that the descendants of Heracles should not stoop to trickery in warfare and remarked, 'Where the lion's skin will not reach, we must patch it out with the fox's.'

8. This is borne out by what he is reported to have done at Miletus. In that city his own friends and allies, whom he had promised to help by overthrowing the democracy and driving out their opponents, changed their minds and came to an agreement with their enemies. Lysander pretended in public that he was delighted at this reconciliation and was promoting an understanding between the two sides, but in private he showed his anger to his own partisans and urged them to attack the popular party again. Then as soon as he learned the uprising had started, he immediately came up and marched into the city, denounced the first conspirators he met, and handled them roughly as if he were going to punish them; at the same time he told the popular party to take heart and not to be afraid of anything, now that he was on the scene. He acted out all this pretence so as to make sure that the leading men of the popular party should not escape but should remain in the city and be killed, and this was exactly what happened, for all those who had taken Lysander at his word were massacred.

Androcleides reports a saying of Lysander's which reveals his utter indifference to the value of an oath. It was a principle of his, so Androcleides says, to cheat boys with dice, but men with oaths. In this he was imitating Polycrates of Samos, although we may think that it ill becomes a general to follow the example of a tyrant, or a Spartan to treat the gods as badly as his enemies. Indeed, the offence against heaven is the worse of the two, for the man who overreaches his opponent by breaking his oath reveals that he is afraid of his enemy, but despises the god he has invoked.

9. At any rate Cyrus sent for Lysander to Sardis, gave him a sum of money, and promised him still more. Indeed, to show his regard he undertook, with a young man's impulsiveness, to lavish his whole fortune on him if his father refused him money for the Spartans, and he declared that if all else failed he would break up the throne of gold and silver on which he sat when he gave audiences. Finally, when he set off to visit his father in Media, he made over the tribute from the cities to Lysander and placed his own authority in the Spartan's hands. He embraced Lysander, begged him not to fight the Athenians at sea until he himself had returned, and promised to bring back with him a strong naval force from Phoenicia and Cilicia: then he set off to join the king.

For his part Lysander was not strong enough to fight a naval battle with the Athenians on equal terms, but on the other hand he could not remain idle with so large a fleet under his command. So he put to sea and reduced some of the islands and later touched at Aegina and Salamis and overran them.[1] He also landed in Attica and greeted Agis, who came down from Decelea in person to meet him and demonstrated to the land forces the strength of his fleet, with the air of one who could sail wherever he chose and possessed complete control of the sea. In spite of this, when he discovered that the Athenians were pursuing him, he withdrew by another route through the islands and returned to Asia Minor.

He found the Hellespont undefended and there he launched a combined operation from Lampsacus, he himself attacking from the sea with the fleet, while Thorax assaulted the walls with the land forces. The city was stormed and Lysander gave it up to his soldiers to plunder. Meanwhile, the Athenian fleet of 180 triremes had just arrived at Elaeus in the Chersonese, and as soon as they learned that Lampsacus was lost, they at once put in at Sestos. There they revictualled and then sailed along the coast to Aegospotami, which lay opposite their enemies, who were still stationed at Lampsacus. The Athenians were commanded by a number of generals, among whom was Philocles, who had recently persuaded the people to pass a decree that all prisoners of war should have their right thumbs cut off to prevent their holding a spear, although they could still handle an oar.

10. Both sides rested for the moment, expecting that there would be a

1. Probably not until 405 B.C., just before his siege of Athens.

sea-battle next day. Lysander in fact had different plans, but he still ordered his sailors and pilots to man their ships at first light, as though they would be going into action in the morning: they were to take up their stations in order and in strict silence and wait for the word of command, and in the same way the land forces were to stand to and remain quiet along the sea-shore. The sun rose and the Athenians sailed up with their whole fleet in line and offered battle. But although the Peloponnesian fleet had been manned while it was still dark and was drawn up in line facing the enemy, Lysander did not put out to meet them: instead he sent out cutters to the ships in the forward positions, with orders that they should stay quiet and remain in line and not sail out against the enemy. And on the same principle, when the Athenians sailed back around mid-day, he did not allow his men off their ships until two or three triremes, which he had sent out to reconnoitre, had returned and reported that the enemy had gone ashore. The following day the same manoeuvres were repeated and similarly on the third and fourth days, until the Athenians began to grow over-confident and to despise their opponents, believing that it was nothing but sheer cowardice which kept the enemy huddled together in close formation.

At this point Alcibiades, who was living in a castle of his own in the Chersonese, rode over to the Athenian army. He criticized the generals first of all for having sited their camp on an exposed beach, where there was no anchorage, in a position which was not merely inconvenient but positively dangerous; and, secondly, for their mistake in bringing their supplies all the way from Sestos. They ought to sail a little way along the coast to the harbour and city of Sestos, and there they would be farther away from their enemies, who were watching their opportunity closely and were commanded by a single general, who inspired such fear that all his orders were promptly carried out. This was Alcibiades' advice, but the Athenian generals paid no attention and one of them, Tydeus, retorted insolently, 'It is we who are in command now, not you.'

11. Alcibiades suspected that there might even be treachery afoot in the Athenian camp and so he made himself scarce. Finally, on the fifth day, the Athenians once more sailed over to the enemy and back again in a contemptuous and careless fashion, as had now become their habit. But this time Lysander gave orders to his reconnoitring vessels

that as soon as they saw the Athenians had disembarked, they were to put about and row back at top speed: then, when they reached the middle of the straits, they were to hoist a bronze shield at the prow as the signal to attack. Lysander himself sailed round the fleet encouraging the pilots and ships' captains, and he impressed on them that they must keep all their crews standing to, sailors and soldiers alike, and then the moment the signal was given, row with all their might against the enemy. So when the shield was hoisted on the look-out vessels and the trumpet on the admiral's flagship sounded the attack, the ships moved forward, while at the same time the land forces raced along the shore to seize the headland. At this point on the Hellespont the two continents are less than two miles apart, and the rowers pulled with such a will that they fairly ate up the distance. Conon, the Athenian general, was the first to notice Lysander's fleet bearing down upon them. He instantly shouted out orders to embark and, in an agony of distress at the impending disaster, commanded, implored, and drove his crews to man their ships. But the men were scattered and his desperate efforts were in vain. They had never expected an attack and, as soon as they had disembarked, some went off to market, others strolled about in the country, or lay down to sleep in their tents, or began to prepare the evening meal, and all of them because of their commanders' inexperience were utterly unaware of what was about to happen. The shouts and the splashing oars of the oncoming fleet were already in their ears when Conon slipped out with eight ships, eluded the enemy and made his way to king Evagoras in Cyprus. The Peloponnesians pounced on the rest of the ships, capturing some of them completely unmanned and ramming others while their crews were still getting aboard. The men, as they ran up unarmed and in straggling order, were slaughtered in a vain attempt to rescue their ships, or else, if they retreated inland, the enemy disembarked and cut them down as they fled. Lysander took 3,000 prisoners, including the generals, and captured the entire fleet, with the exception of the state galley, the *Paralus*, and the ships which escaped with Conon. After plundering the Athenian camp and taking their ships in tow, he sailed back to Lampsacus, accompanied by the triumphal music of flutes and hymns of victory. He had performed a prodigious exploit with the minimum of effort. In the space of a single hour he had put an end to a war which, for its length and for the variety of its incidents and the uncertainty of its fortunes, eclipsed

any that had gone before. The various conflicts and issues at stake had taken on innumerable different forms and witnessed many changes of circumstance, and the war had cost Greece more generals than all her previous contests put together, yet now it was concluded by the foresight and skill of one man. For this reason some people believed that the gods must certainly have taken a hand in the result.

12. There were reports that the brothers Castor and Pollux appeared as twin stars on either side of Lysander's ship and shone out over the rudders just as he started out of the harbour against the enemy. Others say that this disaster was foreshadowed when the great stone fell, for there was a popular belief that a colossal stone had fallen from the sky at Aegospotami,[1] and the people of the Chersonese revere it and point it out to this day. Anaxagoras is said to have predicted that if those bodies which are fixed in the vault of heaven should become loosened by some slip or convulsion of the whole system, one of them might be torn away and plunge to earth. He also asserted that none of the stars was now in its original positon. According to his theory, they are heavenly bodies composed of stone, whose light is generated by the friction of the ether which whirls round them, and they are propelled in fixed orbits by the gyratory force which first set them in motion; it was this force which originally prevented them from falling to earth at the period when cold and heavy bodies became detached from universal matter.

However, there is a more convincing theory than this. Those who hold it reject the explanation that shooting stars are caused by a sudden rush or diffusion of burning ether, which is no sooner ignited than the lower air extinguishes it, or by the combustion caused by this lower air escaping to a higher altitude. They maintain that shooting stars are heavenly bodies, which because of some momentary suspension of the centripetal force which governs them are carried out of their orbit and fall, not on the inhabited regions of the earth, but in most cases outside it or into the surrounding ocean, and for this reason their impact passes unnoticed.

On the other hand Daïmachus in his treatise *On Piety* supports Anaxagoras's theory. He states that a fiery body of enormous size was observed in the sky for seventy-five days continuously before the stone fell. It resembled a flaming cloud and it did not remain at

1. In 468-467 B.C. according to the Parian marble.

rest, but was propelled along with intricate and irregular movements, so that burning fragments, splintered off in its plunging and erratic course, were showered in all directions and flared up brilliantly in the sky, just as shooting stars do. But when it had fallen in that spot and the inhabitants had recovered from their terror and astonishment and gathered round it, they could find not the least trace of the effects of fire: there was nothing but a stone, certainly of a large size, but by no means to be compared to the fiery mass they had observed in the heavens.

It is clear, of course, that Daïmachus's account requires a good deal of indulgence from his readers. But if what he says is true, it entirely disposes of the theory that some rock, dislodged by wind and storm from a mountain-peak, was snatched high into the air and carried along like a spinning-top, and that it plunged to earth at the place where its spinning motion first slackened and stopped. The alternative is that the phenomenon which was witnessed for so many days in the heavens really did consist of fire, and that when this was extinguished, a change in the atmosphere followed which produced disturbances and violent winds, and that these in turn tore the stone from its position. However, a full investigation of such problems belongs to another kind of writing.

13. After the 3,000 Athenians taken prisoner by Lysander had been sentenced to death by the special council of the allies, he sent for Philocles, their general, and asked him what sort of punishment he thought he deserved for having advised his fellow-countrymen to treat other Greeks so outrageously.[1] Philocles, far from being crushed by his misfortunes, told him not to play the prosecutor in a case where there was no judge, but to deal out as victor exactly the same punishment as he would have suffered had he been defeated. Then he bathed, put on a splendid cloak, and led his fellow-countrymen to execution, offering himself as the first victim, as Theophrastus tells us.

After this Lysander sailed to the various cities in the neighbourhood and ordered all the Athenians he found to return to Athens, and he proclaimed that anybody caught outside the city would be put to death without exception. This step, which drove all the Athenians into the capital at once, was deliberately taken so as to produce intense

1. Philocles, besides advocating the decree mentioned on p. 294, had had the crews of two captured triremes put to death by throwing them over a precipice.

scarcity and famine in Athens as soon as possible, and to forestall the necessity for a siege, against which the Athenians might otherwise have been well provided.

He also suppressed both the democratic and other forms of government in the Greek cities of Asia Minor and left one Spartan administrator in each, and under him ten magistrates chosen from the political clubs which he had established everywhere. He followed this procedure just as thoroughly in the cities which had become his allies as in those which had opposed him, and cruising around at his leisure, he laid the foundations, in a sense, of a personal supremacy throughout Greece. In appointing these magistrates, he was not influenced by considerations of birth or wealth, but simply handed over control of affairs to his own associates and partisans, and gave them absolute powers to deal out rewards and punishments. He lent his presence to a number of massacres, and helped to drive out his friends' adversaries and in this way provided the Greeks with a very unwelcome demonstration of Spartan rule. In fact, the comic poet Theopompus chose a particularly inept illustration when he compared the Spartans to tavern-women, because they gave the Greeks an appetising sip of freedom and then mixed vinegar with it. The truth was that the taste was harsh and bitter from the very beginning, since Lysander not only refused to allow the people to be masters of their own affairs, but actually delivered the cities into the hands of the most aggressive and fanatical members of the oligarchic faction.

14. After he had spent some time arranging these affairs and had sent word to Sparta that he was sailing over with 200 ships, he joined forces in Attica with the two Spartan kings, Agis and Pausanias, confidently expecting that he would soon capture Athens. But as the Athenians continued to hold out, he took his ships and returned once more to Asia. Here he overthrew the constitutions of all the remaining cities as he had done elsewhere, and set up councils of ten, putting many citizens to death in each place and driving large numbers into exile. Not long after he expelled all the inhabitants of Samos and handed over the towns on the island to the men they had banished. He also took Sestos out of the Athenians' hands and forbade the native citizens to live there: instead he divided up the city and its surrounding territory among the men who had served as pilots and boatswains in his fleet. This turned out to be the first action of his which was resisted

by the Spartans, who proceeded to restore the country to its inhabitants. Still, there were other measures of Lysander's which won the approval of the whole of Greece, as when, for example, the people of Aegina were given back their city after many years,[1] and in the same way the peoples of Melos and Scione were reinstated by him after the Athenians had handed over these cities and been expelled.

By this time he learned that the people of Athens were suffering terribly from famine, and so he sailed into the Piraeus and reduced the city, which was forced to accept the terms he laid down.[2] One sometimes hears it said by Spartans that Lysander sent a dispatch to the ephors with the words 'Athens is taken', and that they wrote back, '"Taken" would have been enough.' However, this story was invented simply for its neatness. The ephors' actual decree was worded as follows: 'The Spartans have come to these decisions. Demolish the Piraeus and the Long Walls: withdraw from all other cities and keep to your own territory: if you comply with these conditions and recall your exiles, you may have peace, if you want it. As regards the number of your ships, whatever is decided by those on the spot, comply with it.'

The Athenians accepted these terms on the advice of Theramenes, the son of Hagnon. It is said that he was asked on this occasion by Cleomenes, one of the younger orators, whether he dared either by word or action to undo what Themistocles had done, by surrendering to the Spartans the very walls which that statesman had built in defiance of them. Theramenes' reply was: 'I am doing nothing, young man, that runs counter to Themistocles' policy: the very same walls that he put up for Athens' security, we shall pull down for her security. If walls ever made cities prosperous, then Sparta would be the worst provided of all, for she has none.'

15. So Lysander received the surrender of the entire fleet, except for twelve ships, and also of the walls of Athens. Then on the sixteenth day of the month Munychion,[3] which was also the anniversary of the victory over the barbarians at Salamis, he set about changing the form of government. When the Athenians showed their bitter resentment and opposed his measures, he informed the people that he had

1. The Athenians had expelled them in 431 B.C.
2. April 404 B.C.
3. September 404 B.C.

caught the city violating the terms of its capitulation, since the walls were still standing, although the time within which they should have been pulled down had expired. He declared that as they had broken the articles of the treaty, he would submit their case to the allies to be completely reconsidered. Indeed, some people say that a proposal was actually laid before the congress of the allies to sell the whole Athenian people into slavery, and that on this occasion Erianthus the Theban went so far as to move that Athens should be razed to the ground and the country around it made a pasture for sheep. But later, so the story goes, when the principal delegates met for a banquet, a man from Phocis sang the opening chorus from Euripides' *Electra*, which begins with the lines:

> Daughter of Agamemnon
> I have come, Electra, to your rustic court.[1]

At this the whole company was moved to pity and felt that it would be an outrage to destroy so glorious a city which had produced such great men.

After the Athenians had finally given way to all Lysander's demands, he sent for a great company of flute girls from the city and collected all those who were in his camp. Then to the sound of their music, he pulled down the walls and burned the ships, while the allies garlanded themselves with flowers, rejoiced together, and hailed that day as the beginning of freedom for Greece. Next, without any delay, Lysander set about making changes in the constitution, and established a council of thirty in Athens and ten in the Piraeus. He also posted a garrison in the Acropolis and appointed Callibius, a Spartan, to be its military governor. It was Callibius who once raised his staff to strike Autolycus the wrestler, the man whom Xenophon makes the principal character in his *Symposium*. When Autolycus gripped him by the legs and threw him to the ground, Lysander showed no sympathy with Callibius's rage, but actually reprimanded him and told him that he did not know how to govern free men. However, the Thirty soon afterwards put Autolycus to death, to please Callibius.

16. After settling these affairs Lysander sailed for Thrace, but he sent home to Sparta what remained of the Athenian public funds and all

1. *Electra*, 167–8.

the gifts and crowns he had received himself. He entrusted all this treasure to Gylippus, who had been the Spartan commander in Sicily. This amount was a large one, as many people had naturally given presents to a man of such great power, who was in a sense the master of all Greece. Gylippus is said to have cut open the sacks at the bottom, taken a large quantity of silver from each, and then had them sewn up again, not knowing that each sack had in it a note stating the value of the contents. When he arrived in Sparta, Gylippus hid the money he had stolen under the tiles of his house, handed over the sacks to the ephors and showed the seals that were on them. However, when the ephors opened the sacks and counted the money, the amount failed to tally with the written accounts, and they were mystified until one of Gylippus's servants revealed the truth to them through the cryptic remark that there were a great many owls roosting under his master's tiles, for apparently most of the coinage of that time bore the emblem of an owl on account of the supremacy of Athens.

17. Having tarnished his brilliant reputation by this mean and ignoble action, Gylippus left Sparta in disgrace. The most far-sighted of the Spartans, on the other hand, saw in this episode a disturbing proof of the corrupting power of money for the very reason that it was the prominent rather than the ordinary citizens who were exposed to it. They reproached Lysander and called upon the ephors to purify the country by eliminating all gold and silver, which represented, they were convinced, so much imported ruin. The ephors then pondered the problem. It was Sciraphidas, according to Theopompus, or Phlogidas, according to Ephorus, who declared that they ought not to admit gold or silver coinage into the city, but should continue to use the currency of their forefathers. Now the traditional currency consisted of iron that had been dipped in vinegar while it was red-hot: this was done to prevent its being worked, the dipping making it brittle and unpliable. Besides this it was extremely heavy and difficult to transport, and even a great quantity and weight of it represented very little in value. It seems likely that all money was originally of this kind, and that instead of coins, men used spits made of iron or bronze. For this reason many small coins are known to this day as *obols* (spits), and six obols are called a drachma, since this was the largest number that could be grasped in the hand.

Lysander's friends, however, opposed this advice and insisted that

the money should be kept in Sparta. Finally, it was decided that currency could be imported for public use, but that any private person found in possession of it should be put to death. This was as if to say that Lycurgus had been afraid of money itself, and not of the greed that it engenders; and indeed, as events turned out, so far from eliminating this vice by forbidding private individuals to own money, the law tended to encourage them by permitting such ownership to the state, so that in this way its use acquired a certain dignity and honour. It was hardly possible for men who saw money valued in public to despise it in private, or to regard what was evidently prized and cherished by the community as something worthless or useless to the individual. On the contrary, public practices tend to impress themselves far more swiftly upon the habits of private life than individual faults or failings ever do upon the community. When the whole deteriorates, it is only natural that the parts should become corrupt with it, but those diseases which travel from the part to the whole encounter plenty of correctives and antidotes in the parts which remain sound. Thus the Spartans set terror and the law to guard their citizens' houses and prevent money from finding a way in, but they did nothing to make their spirits impervious or superior to its power: instead they implanted in their people a lively ambition to acquire wealth by setting it up as an exalted and noble object. However, I have already criticized the Spartans' conduct in this respect in another essay.[1]

18. Out of the plunder he had taken, Lysander set up bronze statues of himself and each of his two admirals at Delphi, and he also dedicated two golden stars[2] representing Castor and Pollux, which vanished just before the battle of Leuctra. Besides this, in the treasury dedicated by Brasidas and the Acanthians there was kept a trireme of gold and ivory three feet long, which Cyrus sent Lysander as a present to commemorate his victory. Anaxandrides of Delphi also tells us that Lysander deposited there a talent of silver, fifty-two minae, and eleven staters, a statement which can hardly be reconciled with the accounts of his poverty which we have from other authors. At any rate Lysander at this time wielded a greater power than any Greek

1. *Inst. Lacon.*, Ch. 42.

2. Their disappearance was taken as an evil omen, portending the defeat of the Spartans by the Thebans at Leuctra in 371 B.C.

had ever done before him, and he gave the impression that his ambition and sense of his own superiority even exceeded his power. He was the first Greek, so Duris tells us, in whose honour Greek cities erected altars and offered sacrifices as though he were a god, or for whom songs of triumph were sung. One of these has been handed down and begins as follows:

> Let us sing the praise
> Of sacred Hellas' commander
> Who came from Sparta of the broad plains
> O, Io, Paean!

Besides this, the people of Samos decreed that their festival in honour of Hera should be called *Lysandreia*. Lysander always kept the poet Choerilus with him to celebrate his achievements in verse, and he was so delighted with Antilochus, who wrote some respectable lines in his praise, that he filled his cap with silver and made him a present of it. When Antimachus of Colophon and a certain Nicceratus of Heracleia competed at the Lysandreia with poems about him, he gave the prize to Nicceratus, which so infuriated Antimachus that he suppressed his poem. Plato, who was a young man at that time and was a warm admirer of Antimachus's verse, tried to console the poet's annoyance at this defeat by pointing out that it is the ignorant who suffer from their ignorance, just as the blind do from their lack of sight. However, when the harper Aristonous, who had been champion six times at the Pythian games, told Lysander as a piece of amiable flattery that if he won again he intended to have his victory announced by the herald under Lysander's name, and the latter asked, 'Does he mean as my slave?'

19. To those in authority and of equal rank with himself this ambitious temper of Lysander's was merely annoying. But side by side with his ambition, an extreme arrogance and severity began to show themselves in his character, fostered by the flattery which was constantly paid him. Neither in the rewards nor in the punishments which he dealt out was there any attempt at the restraint which a democratic leader might have observed. The prizes which he distributed to his friends and allies took the form of unquestioned authority and complete autocracy over cities, while nothing short of the death of his enemies could satisfy his anger; not even exile was permitted. An

example of this occurred at a later date in Miletus. Lysander was afraid that those leaders of the democratic party there who were still active might escape into exile, and there were others who had gone into hiding whom he wanted to lure into the open, and so he took an oath that he would do them no harm. When the first took him at his word and the second came forward, he handed them all over to the aristocratic party for execution, to the number of no less than 800. In the other cities, too, untold numbers of the democratic parties were massacred, for Lysander had men put to death not only to settle his personal scores but to gratify the greed and hatred of his friends in each city, and he made himself their partner in these crimes. For this reason, Eteocles the Spartan was felt to have spoken for everybody when he declared that Greece could not have stood two Lysanders. These were the very words which Archestratus used of Alcibiades, as Theophrastus tells us. In his case it was a combination of insolence, luxury, and self-will that gave such offence: in Lysander's it was the harshness of his disposition which made his power feared and hated.

At first the Spartans paid little attention to his accusers: but when Pharnabazus became indignant at the marauding raids which Lysander had carried out in his territory, and sent men to Sparta to denounce him, the ephors were finally roused. They caught Thorax, one of Lysander's friends and fellow-generals, with money in his possession and put him to death, and they sent a dispatch scroll to Lysander to recall him.

These scrolls are made up in the following way. When the ephors send out a general or admiral, they prepare two cylindrical pieces of wood of exactly the same length and thickness, each corresponding to the other in its dimensions. One of these they keep themselves, the other being given to the departing officer, and these pieces of wood are known as *scytalae*. Then whenever they want to send some important message secretly, they make a long narrow strip of parchment, like a leather strap, and wind it round the cylinder with the edges touching, so that there is no space between the folds and the entire surface of the *scytale* is covered. Having done this, they write their message on the parchment in the position in which it was wrapped round the cylinder, and then they unwind the parchment and send it without the cylinder to the commander. When it reaches him he has no means of deciphering it, as the letters have no connexion and appear to be all broken up, and he has to take his own cylinder and

wind the strip of parchment round it. The spiral is then arranged in the correct sequence, the letters fall into their proper order, and he can read round the cylinder and understand the message as a continuous whole. The parchment, like the cylinder, is called a *scytale*, just as the thing that is measured often has the same name as the measure.

20. When the scroll reached Lysander at the Hellespont, he was seriously alarmed. As he was more afraid of Pharnabazus's accusations than of anyone else's, he hastened to arrange a meeting with him, hoping that he could settle their differences. When they met, he appealed to Pharnabazus to write another letter about him to the ephors, explaining that he had not suffered any injury and had no complaints to make. However, Lysander failed to understand that this was a case of playing Cretan against Cretan, as the proverb has it, or of diamond cut diamond. Pharnabazus promised to do everything Lysander proposed and openly wrote a letter of the kind he had asked for, but kept another by him which he had written privately. Then, when the moment came to affix the seals, he changed over the letters, which looked exactly alike, and handed Lysander the one he had written in secret. Lysander duly arrived in Sparta, proceeded to the senate-house, as was the custom, and gave the ephors Pharnabazus's letter. He felt confident that the most serious charge against him had been withdrawn, for Pharnabazus, it must be explained, was in high favour with the Spartans, as he had played a more active part in the war on their side than any of the Persian generals. But when the ephors read the letter and showed it to him, Lysander understood that:

Others besides Odysseus can be cunning,

and for the moment he had to retire in utter confusion. A few days afterwards he met the ephors and told them that he owed it to the god to visit the temple of Zeus Ammon, and offer up there the sacrifices he had vowed before his battles. Some people say that when he was besieging the city of Aphytae, in Thrace, the god appeared and stood by him in his sleep, and that on this account he raised the siege, since it was the god's will, and ordered the people of Aphytae to sacrifice to Zeus Ammon; and this, they conclude, was the reason which made him anxious to travel to Libya and propitiate the god. However, the general opinion was that Lysander was using the god

as a pretext, because he was really afraid of the ephors and could not endure the harsh discipline of life at home, or the authority of others. He longed, they believed, to roam and travel about in foreign countries, just as a horse longs for freedom when it has ranged the open pastures and is then brought back to the stable for his usual work. Ephorus, it is true, offers yet another explanation for this absence abroad, which I shall mention presently.

21. After he had obtained leave with great difficulty from the ephors, he sailed away. Once he had left, however, the two kings discovered that he held the cities completely in his power and was virtually the master of Greece through the device of the political clubs which he had formed, and so they took steps to depose his friends everywhere and restore the control of affairs to the democratic parties. But these changes were followed by fresh disturbances. First of all the Athenians,[1] setting out from the fortress of Phyle, attacked the Thirty and overpowered them. Lysander therefore hurried home and persuaded the Spartans to take the side of the oligarchies and punish the democratic parties. They decided to help the Thirty first of all, and so they sent them a hundred talents for the expenses of the war and appointed Lysander as general. The Spartan kings, however, were jealous of him and were afraid that he might capture Athens a second time and, accordingly, they decided that one of them should accompany the expedition. So Pausanias went out, nominally to help the Thirty against the people, but really to put an end to the war and prevent Lysander from making himself master of Athens again with the help of his friends. This he achieved easily enough, and by reconciling the Athenians and putting a stop to the civil war he frustrated Lysander's ambitions. But when the Athenians not long afterwards again rose in revolt, it was Pausanias's turn to be blamed for having taken the curb of the oligarchy out of the people's mouth and allowed them to become arrogant and insolent again. Lysander, on the other hand, increased his reputation as a man who had used his authority in downright fashion, not to please other people or to win applause, but for the solid advantage of Sparta.

22. Lysander was also brutal and aggressive in his speech and inclined to intimidate anyone who opposed him. The Argives, for example,

1. 403 B.C.

had a dispute about their frontiers with the Spartans and considered that they had made out a better case than their opponents. Lysander then laid his hand on his sword and remarked, 'The man who is master of this possesses the best arguments about frontiers.' On another occasion at a conference, where some Megarian had been taking liberties in the way he addressed him, Lysander retorted: 'These words, stranger, need a city to back them up.' When the Boeotians were trying to play a double game with him, he asked them whether he should take his army through their territory with spears upright or levelled. Again, at the time when the Corinthians revolted and Lysander marched up to their walls, he saw that the Spartans were hesitating to begin the assault. At this moment a hare was seen leaping across the moat, whereupon Lysander asked, 'Are you not ashamed to be afraid of enemies who are so lazy that hares can sleep on their walls?'

When king Agis died[1] and left a brother, Agesilaus, and a boy, Leotychides, who was supposed to be his son, Lysander, who had been a lover of Agesilaus, persuaded him to claim the crown, on the ground that he was a true descendant of Heracles. Leotychides, I should explain, was accused of being a son of Alcibiades, who had secretly carried on a liaison with Timaea, Agis's wife, while he was living in exile in Sparta. Agis, they say, had calculated the dates and come to the conclusion that his wife could not have conceived the child by him, and so he ignored Leotychides and openly disowned him to the last. But when he was brought to Heraea during his final illness and was on his death-bed, he was persuaded by the entreaties of the young man and his friends to declare in the presence of many witnesses that Leotychides was his legitimate son, and he died begging them to testify to this fact before the Spartans. This testimony was duly given in Leotychides' favour. As for Agesilaus, although he had the powerful support of Lysander and enjoyed great prestige in other respects, his claim was seriously damaged by Diopeithes. This man was famous for his skill in interpreting oracles, and he quoted the following prophecy which referred to Agesilaus's lameness:

Though *you* are sound of limb, proud Sparta, look to your ruler,
Lest from your stock a disabled prince should succeed to the kingdom:
For then unlooked-for ordeals and unnumbered trials shall oppress you
And the stormy billows of man-killing war shall roll down upon you.

1. 398 B.C.

Many people were swayed by this oracle and looked to Leotychides as the true successor, but Lysander declared that Diopeithes' interpretation of the oracle was quite wrong. He contended that the meaning was not that the god would be displeased if a lame man were to rule over the Spartans, but that the kingdom would be a lame one if bastards and men of low birth were to share the crown with the true descendants of Heracles. Partly through this argument and partly because his personal influence was very strong, he got his way and Agesilaus became king.

23. No sooner had he done so than Lysander set out to rouse him to lead an expedition into Asia, and held out the hope that he would subdue the Persians and make himself the greatest of mankind. He also wrote to his friends in Asia Minor asking them to invite the Spartans to send Agesilaus as commander-in-chief in their war against the barbarians. They complied and sent an embassy to Sparta with this request, which was indeed as great an honour for Agesilaus as that of being made king, and one which he owed no less to Lysander's efforts. And yet ambitious spirits, who are otherwise well enough fitted to command, often fail to achieve great exploits through sheer jealousy of their equals in reputation, because they turn the very men who might have helped them into their rivals in virtue. On this occasion Agesilaus did indeed include Lysander among the thirty counsellors who accompanied him, intending to treat him with especial favour as his most intimate friend. But when they arrived in Asia Minor the Greeks there scarcely consulted Agesilaus at all, since they knew nothing of him. Lysander, on the other hand, because of their previous close association with him, was constantly beset with people at his door or following him about, for his friends came to pay court to him, and those who were under suspicion came out of fear. And just as in a tragedy it may easily happen that the actor who plays some messenger or servant assumes the leading role and becomes the centre of interest, while the man who actually wears the crown and wields the sceptre is not even listened to when he speaks, so in this case the whole prestige of the command came to be centred upon the counsellor, while the king was left with nothing but the empty name of authority. No doubt these extravagant ambitions should have been discouraged and Lysander compelled to take second place, yet it was unworthy of Agesilaus to cast off and humiliate a friend and a

man who had done him great service, merely for the sake of his own prestige.

In the first place, then, the king gave Lysander no opportunities to distinguish himself and did not even appoint him to a command. Secondly, whenever he noticed anybody on whose behalf Lysander was especially exerting himself, he invariably refused the request and sent him away with less than any ordinary petitioner could obtain, and in this way he unobtrusively undermined and weakened Lysander's influence. Finally, when Lysander failed to achieve any of his objects, he understood that any effort he might make on behalf of his friends merely served to obstruct their interests. So he not only ceased to urge their claims, but begged them not to apply or pay their court in any way to himself, but to address themselves to the king and to the men who were better placed than he was at present to reward those who did them honour. Most of the Greeks, when they heard this, ceased to trouble him with their affairs, but they continued to treat him with great deference, and in fact by waiting upon him in public walks and places of exercise, they caused Agesilaus, who envied Lysander this honour, more annoyance than ever. The result was that while the king gave most of the Spartans commands in the field and governorships of cities, he appointed Lysander to be the carver at his table, and added by way of insult to the Ionians that they could now come and pay their homage to his carver of meats. At this Lysander determined to have an interview with him, at which a brief and truly Laconian exchange took place. Lysander remarked: 'You understand very well, Agesilaus, how to humiliate your friends.' The king replied: 'Certainly, if they want to be greater than I am. But it is only fair that those who advance my power should also share in it.' 'It may be, Agesilaus,' Lysander rejoined, 'that you have spoken more wisely than I have acted. Still, let me appeal to you, if only because of the foreigners who have their eyes on us, to give me a post under your command, wherever you think I may be of more use to you and cause you less annoyance than at present.'

24. After this he was sent on a special mission to the Hellespont. Here, although his feud with Agesilaus still rankled, he did not neglect his duty. He persuaded Spithridates the Persian, a man of noble birth who was in command of an army, to revolt from Pharnabazus with whom he had fallen out, and brought him to Agesilaus. After

this Lysander was not employed in any other capacity in the war, and when his period of service had expired, he sailed back to Sparta in disgrace. He was not merely enraged with Agesilaus, but more resentful than ever of the whole Spartan system of government, and he determined to put into action without delay the plans for bringing about a revolutionary change in the constitution, which he had evidently elaborated some time before.

This was his scheme. The descendants of Heracles, who had originally joined the Dorians and come down into the Peloponnese, continued to flourish in Sparta as a large tribe with glorious traditions; but not every family which belonged to it could qualify for succession to the throne, in fact, the kings were chosen from no more than two houses, which were known as the Eurypontidae and the Agiadae. The others enjoyed no special advantages in public life on account of their noble birth, for the honours which could be earned by merit lay open to all who had the necessary ability to win them. It was one of the latter Heraclid families to which Lysander belonged, and once he had earned a great reputation for his achievements and acquired many friends and a large measure of influence, it angered him that the city, after being raised to such heights of power through his own efforts, should continue to be ruled by men of no better family than himself. His plan, therefore, was to abolish these two houses' exclusive claim to the throne and throw it open to the whole Heraclid tribe, or according to some accounts not merely to them, but to the Spartans in general. In this way the high prerogatives of the crown would not be confined only to the descendants of Heracles, but to those who, like him, had been singled out for their prowess, since it was that fact which had raised him to divine honours. Lysander hoped that if the throne were to be disposed of on this principle, no Spartan would be chosen before himself.

25. First of all, then, he prepared to try to win over his countrymen by his own powers of persuasion, and he studied carefully a speech written on the subject by Cleon of Halicarnassus. He soon saw, however, that any scheme of reform so far-reaching and so unexpected as this called for more daring measures to carry it through. And so, just as in a tragedy, where human resource is not enough, he brought supernatural machinery to bear upon his fellow-countrymen, by collecting and arranging various oracular prophecies and responses of

Apollo. He felt that Cleon's skilful rhetoric would be of little use, unless he could first alarm and overwhelm the Spartans' minds with religious awe and superstitious terror before trying to influence them with his arguments.

According to Ephorus, then, he tried first to bribe the Pythian priestess at Delphi; after which he made an unsuccessful attempt through Pherecles to win over the priestesses of Dodona, and then he visited the temple of Ammon, met the priests of the oracle there and offered them a large sum of money. They refused his proposal indignantly and sent messengers to Sparta to denounce him. Lysander was acquitted of these charges, whereupon, so Ephorus tells us, the Libyans as they were leaving, remarked, 'Well, at least we shall use our judgement better than you, men of Sparta, when you come to live among us in Libya,' for they knew that there was an ancient oracle which had commanded the Spartans to settle in Libya. The whole design and mechanism of Lysander's plot, I should explain, was far from being a trivial affair, nor was it set in motion without a great deal of preparation; it was founded upon a number of important assumptions, like a mathematical proposition, and it progressed to its conclusion through a series of steps, which were intricate and difficult to ensure, and in describing it I propose to follow the account of one[1] who was both a historian and a philosopher.

26. There was a woman in Pontus who claimed to be pregnant by Apollo. Most people disbelieved her, as was natural, but her story was also quite widely accepted, so that when she gave birth to a male child, many persons of consequence took an interest in the care and upbringing of the boy, who, for some reason or other, was given the name of Silenus. Lysander took these facts as a foundation and wove the rest of the story out of his own imagination. He made use of a number of reputable people, who lent substance to the tale of the boy's birth without exciting any suspicion. They also brought back another report from Delphi and carefully spread it abroad in Sparta, to the effect that certain oracles of great antiquity had been inscribed on secret tablets and were guarded by the Delphic priests there. These were not to be touched, nor was it lawful even to look at them, until at the appointed time someone born of Apollo should appear, give the custodians authoritative proof of his birth, and take away the tab-

1. Probably Ephorus.

lets containing the oracles. With the way thus prepared, Silenus was then to present himself as Apollo's son and demand to be shown the oracles, while those of the priests who were in the plot were to question him about his birth and check his answers minutely, and finally they would profess themselves convinced that he was the son of Apollo and show him the writings. Thereupon Silenus, in the presence of many witnesses, was to read out the prophecies aloud and in particular the one relating to the Spartan succession, for the sake of which the whole scheme had been contrived, and which declared that Sparta's interests would best be served if her kings were chosen from among the most distinguished of the citizens.

At length the time came when Silenus had grown to be a youth and was almost ready to play his part. But then Lysander's drama was wrecked by the cowardice of one of his actors or accomplices, whose courage failed and who backed out when the moment for action arrived. However, none of all this came to light until after Lysander was dead.

27. He met his death before Agesilaus returned from Asia, after he himself had plunged, or rather plunged much of Greece, into a war with Thebes.[1] There are various accounts of this, some putting the blame on Lysander, others on the Thebans and others on both together. The charge made against the Thebans is that when Agesilaus was offering sacrifice at Aulis,[2] following the example of Agamemnon before he set out for Asia, the Thebans intervened and scattered the sacrifice; also that Androcleides and Amphitheus of Thebes had received bribes from the Persians to stir up a war in Greece against Sparta and that the Thebans thereupon attacked Phocis and ravaged its territory. The other side of the story is that Lysander was provoked in the first place because Thebes was the only state to demand a tenth part of the spoils captured from the Athenians at Decelea, while the rest of the allies made no claim, and secondly because the Thebans had protested against Lysander's action in taking sums of money from Athens and sending them to Sparta. But what enraged him most was

1. The Boeotian war. In 395 B.C. a number of acts of aggression by Sparta led to the formation of an alliance between Thebes and Athens against her. In 394 Corinth and Argos joined the alliance and the war lasted until 387 B.C.

2. In 396 B.C.

the fact that the Thebans were the first to give the Athenians the opportunity to free themselves from the Thirty Tyrants he had set up. The Spartans, on the other hand, had given their support to the Thirty's reign of terror by decreeing that all Athenian fugitives should be sent back to Attica in whatever country they were found, and that any state which hindered their return should be declared an enemy of Sparta. In reply to this the Thebans passed counter-measures which deserve to be compared to the great acts of Heracles and Dionysus, the benefactors of mankind. These decrees laid it down that every house and city in Boeotia should be open to Athenians who needed shelter; that whoever refused to help an Athenian refugee against anyone attempting to carry him off by force should be fined a talent, and that if any armed men should march through Boeotia against the Thirty Tyrants at Athens, no Theban should either see or hear about it. They did not stop at voting such truly Hellenic and humane decrees, but they acted up to the spirit of them. Thus, when Thrasybulus and his supporters seized the fortress of Phyle, they set out from Thebes and the Thebans provided them not only with arms and money and a suitable base for operations, but also kept their movements secret. These were the charges which Lysander brought against the Thebans.

28. He had now developed a thoroughly harsh disposition, because of the melancholy which had grown upon him with advancing years, and so he goaded the ephors into declaring war, assumed command himself, and set off for the campaign. Afterwards the ephors also sent out king Pausanias with an army. The plan was that Pausanias should march by a roundabout route and enter Boeotia by way of Mount Cithaeron, while Lysander with a large force should advance through Phocis to meet him. He seized the city of Orchomenus, which came over to him of its own accord, and attacked and plundered Lebadeia. Then he sent a dispatch to Pausanias, telling him to march from Plataea and join forces with him at Haliartus, and promising that he himself would be before the walls of Haliartus at daybreak. The messenger carrying this letter fell into the hands of some scouts and it was brought to Thebes. The Thebans accordingly entrusted the defence of their capital to a force of Athenians who had come to help them. They themselves started out early in the evening and succeeded in reaching Haliartus a little before Lysander and throwing a part of

their force into the city. Lysander decided at first to post his army on a neighbouring hill and wait for Pausanias. However, as the day advanced, he could not remain inactive any longer, but got his men under arms, exhorted the allied troops and led them along the road in column towards the city wall. Meanwhile the rest of the Theban force, which had remained outside, advanced to attack the Spartan rear-guard near the spring called Cissusa, leaving the city on their left hand. This is the place where the infant Dionysus, according to the legend, was washed by his nurses after his birth; at any rate the water has something of the colour and sparkle of wine and is clean and very sweet to drink. The Cretan storax plant grows thickly in this neighbourhood and the people of Haliartus accept this as a proof that Rhadamanthus once lived there, and they show his tomb which they call Alea. Close by there is also a tomb of Alcmene, for the story goes that she was buried there, having married Rhadamanthus after the death of her first husband, Amphitryon.

The Thebans inside the city, who were drawn up in battle order with the Haliartians, made no move for some time, but as soon as they saw Lysander coming up to the wall at the head of the leading troops, they suddenly flung open the gates and charged them. They killed Lysander and his soothsayer and a few of his companions, but the greater part of the advance guard quickly fell back on the main body. The Thebans did not pause for a moment but pressed them hard, and finally the whole Spartan force took to flight and escaped into the hills, losing a thousand of their number. Three hundred of the Thebans were also killed in their advance, because they pursued the enemy over this rough and dangerous ground. These were men who had been accused of supporting the Spartans and because of their eagerness to clear themselves of this charge in the eyes of their fellow citizens, they did not spare themselves in the pursuit and sacrificed their lives.

29. Pausanias learned of the disaster while he was on the march from Plataea to Thespiae. He at once put his army into battle order and proceeded to Haliartus, while Thrasybulus also moved up from Thebes at the head of his Athenians. Pausanias's intention was then to ask permission to take up the dead under a truce, but the very suggestion caused an uproar among the older Spartans. They thought this intolerable and came to the king to protest that they must on no

account resort to a truce to recover Lysander's body. Sheer force of arms was the only way to get it back, and if they won they could bury it as victors: if not, it would be a glorious thing to lie in the same place as their general. This was the attitude of the older men, but Pausanias saw clearly that not only would it be a difficult task to defeat the Thebans, who by this time were triumphant at their victory, but also that Lysander's body lay near the walls, which made it difficult to recover without a truce, even if the Spartans won the battle. He therefore sent out a herald, concluded a truce, and withdrew his forces. As soon as they had carried Lysander's body across the Boeotian frontier, they buried it in the friendly territory of their ally Panope, and here his monument now stands, beside the road which leads from Delphi to Chaeronea.

Here the army encamped, and the story goes that one of the Phocians was describing the battle to another who had not been present, and mentioned that the Thebans attacked them just after Lysander had crossed the river Hoplites. Then a Spartan, who was a friend of Lysander and was puzzled by this word, asked what was meant by Hoplites, as he did not know the name. 'It was just where the enemy cut down our leading ranks,' the Phocian answered; 'they call the stream which flows past the city the Hoplites.' When the Spartan heard this, he burst into tears and exclaimed that no man could escape his destiny, for Lysander had apparently been given an oracle which ran as follows:

I warn you, beware above all the sound of the rushing Hoplites,
And of an earth-born dragon, which cunningly strikes from behind you.

However, some people maintain that the Hoplites does not flow in front of Haliartus, but that it is the name of a winter torrent near Coronea, which runs into the Philarus and then flows past that city. In earlier times it was called the Hoplias, but is now the Isomantus. The man who killed Lysander was a citizen of Haliartus named Neochorus, who had a dragon as an emblem on his shield, and this, it was supposed, was the meaning of the oracle. It is said, too, that at the time of the Peloponnesian war, the Thebans were given an oracle from the Apollonian shrine of Ismenus, which foretold not only the battle of Delium,[1] but also this battle of Haliartus twenty-nine years later. The text was as follows:

1. In 424 B.C.

When you go hunting the wolf with the spear, keep your eye on the frontier
And the hill Orchalides, which the foxes never abandon.

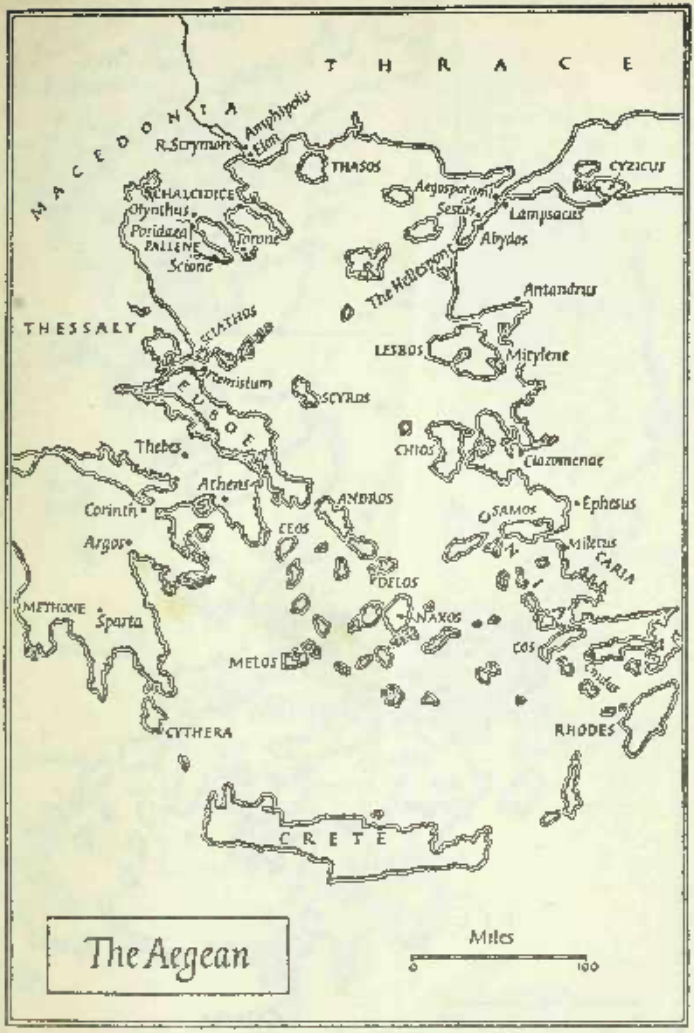
By 'the frontier' the oracle meant the country near Delium, where Boeotia adjoins Attica, while the hill of Orchalides, which is now called Alopecus, or 'hill of foxes', is situated in the territory of Haliartus on the side nearest Mount Helicon.

30. The death of Lysander in these circumstances caused such an outcry that the Spartans put their king on trial for his life, but Pausanias did not dare to await the issue and fled to Tegea, where he spent the rest of his life as a suppliant in the shrine of Athena. One reason for this was that Lysander's poverty, which came to light after his death, served to bring his best qualities into prominence. Although he had held immense wealth and power in his hands, and although his favour had been coveted by the Greek cities and even by the king of Persia, yet he had not sought to improve his family's fortunes in the smallest degree, so far as money was concerned. This is what Theopompus tells us, and he is generally more reliable in his praise than in his censure, since it gives him more pleasure to find fault with a man than to speak well of him.

However, some time later, according to Ephorus, a dispute arose at Sparta among the allies, which made it necessary to refer to the records which Lysander had kept by him, and Agesilaus went to his house for this purpose. There he found the scroll containing the speech on the constitution, arguing that the monarchy should be taken out of the hands of the Eurypontid and Agiad families and thrown open to all Spartans alike, and that the choice should be made from the best citizens. Agesilaus was anxious to make this speech public and bring it home to every Spartan just what kind of a citizen Lysander had really been. However, Lacratidas, a level-headed man, who was at that time the senior ephor in office, restrained him and argued that the best course was not to disturb Lysander in his grave, but rather to make sure that such a persuasive and pernicious composition should be buried with him.

At any rate the Spartans paid him many honours at his death. In particular they fined the men who had been betrothed to his daughters and who, as soon as Lysander had been found after his death to be a poor man, refused to marry them. The reason given for the fine was

that they had courted the marriage so long as they thought Lysander was rich, but deserted him as soon as his poverty proved him to have been just and honourable. It appears that there were penalties in Sparta not only for failure to marry, or for a late marriage, but also for a bad marriage, and they made a point of inflicting the latter on men who sought a rich wife instead of a good one, who belonged to their own social level. This, then, is what we have found to tell about Lysander.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The cover shows a Demaretelon coin issued in Syracuse, Sicily, in 479 B.C. (photo: Snark Archives)

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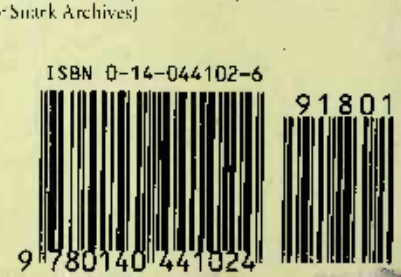
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